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## GREAT MOTHER FOREST

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# GREAT MOTHER FOREST

BY  
ATTILIO GATTI

*Illustrated*

NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1937

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A





TO  
MY WIFE



## P R E F A C E

In the following words, I wish to introduce to the American public both this book and myself; and also that part of Belgian Congo which I have endeavored to comprehend in the six years I have spent there during my last, and three previous, expeditions.

Of course the average reader knows already many Belgian Congos. Each one of them is as different from the others as are the mentality, the humor, the character of the various writers who have presented them, their personal experiences and the number of weeks or months that these experiences have lasted.

One of these Congos is a dark kingdom of horror, witchcraft, black magic. Another is just the opposite, a pagan paradise to be expressed only in terms of Negro civilization, arts and culture. A third is a country practically unexplored, where one must continually watch one's step to avoid falling into the wide-open jaws of fierce wild animals or the boiling pots of cannibal savages. Another again is a Congo so deprived of strangeness and mystery that one might easily mistake it for a sort of annex to Broadway or Times Square.

I have just read a book by a woman who, in quickly crossing Central Africa, succeeded in discovering that

the first picture of Belgian Congo is a tedious joke and constructed of bunk and fake as are all the others. Finding the time, also, to sum up all Belgian officials in caricatures of small, neurotic, unshaven brutes; drunkards terrified of heat, of imaginary sicknesses, of their own shadows, continually raising their puny arms to lash the face and back of every native in sight.

I wish that I could improve upon these discoveries by stating that all these concepts of Belgian Congo are false, and mine alone the true one. If I do not do so, it is not through a sense of modesty. But the fact is that this is a huge country, a quarter as large as the vast United States. And to judge it in its entirety, particularly for the many people who know very little French and not even one or two of the languages indispensable to deal with the natives without using the treacherous institution of interpreter, is just as risky as for a newly arrived European, speaking no English, to pass judgment upon the whole of America after riding for some days in a Third Avenue bus.

When, eighteen years ago, after four years in the war as an officer in the Italian army, I went to Africa for the first time, I thought I knew, if not everything, at least a great part of it. But now that I have spent thirteen years in nine expeditions in Central, South and East Africa; now that I have added some half dozen languages to what I know of Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, French and English; now that I have dragged my feet, stuck my cars, paddled canoes along some hundred thousand miles of African path, and have gone in quest of every African animal and have become friends — good, true friends — with some thousands of natives — “privates,” chiefs, witch doctors, Sultanis — and now that I have spent thirty beautiful

months in just a little corner of the equatorial forest of the Ituri without even learning the A, B, and C of it — well, now, I feel that I do not know anything.

Yet, there is one thing of which I am deeply sure. That I love Africa. And of all Africa, I humbly, devotedly, love Belgian Congo, and the infinite variety of scenery, fauna and flora that Nature, with lavish hands, has given her.

And above all else, I like the natives — the handsome, aristocratic, pastoral Watussi; the poor, unspoiled Bandande just emerging out of savage life and innocent cannibalism; the sophisticated Mangbetu who push their artistic sense to alter even the form of their cranium; the carefree, primitive Mambuti, who in their absolute destitution have found the secret of complete happiness.

I like and respect the African native. And he likes and respects me.

I like and respect him as a human being who has full right to be thus regarded; just as I loved and valued my soldiers during the war when I thought it was my duty and their interest to keep all the discipline needed, but also, always, and in every circumstance to give them the good example I owed to them.

And, finally, I love some, and respect all, the Belgian officials because, year after year, I have seen them busy at their gigantic task, at their unbelievably varied and extensive work, at their unceasing fight against ignorance and famine, sleeping sickness and secret societies. And I am glad of this opportunity to pay them high and genuine tribute of admiration.

As for this book, all I can say is that in writing it, I have tried to be as sincere as it is humanly possible to be. I have not looked for the sensational or the spec-

tacular, for great thrills or morbid emotions — and therefore I have not found them.

My only ambition is that its complete honesty will make itself felt through the following pages which I have written down there at Tzamboho, our base camp, deeply buried in the Great Mother Forest that has given me leave to go but has kept jealously all of my heart.

A. G.

New York, February, 1937.

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## GREAT MOTHER FOREST



## CHAPTER ONE

### GREAT MOTHER FOREST

THIS is the song that the Chief Musician sings :

“ Forest !

Thou art beautiful and always green and fresh and young.  
As beautiful and green and fresh and young as a virgin  
That Muungu, the God of Gods, hath made.  
Hath he, himself, made.

“ Forest !

Thou art a mother to us, thine own children.  
A mother who giveth us food and drink and shelter  
And weapons and medicines and all.  
Who giveth us life and strength, and death and weakness, too.  
Who giveth all.

“ A mother to us, thou art.

As thou hast been to our fathers.  
And to the fathers of the fathers of our fathers. Forever.  
As thou wilt be to our sons.  
And to the sons of the sons of our sons. Forever.

“ Mother Forest !

Thou art great. How can I say how greatly great thou art ?  
I, and my wives and my little ones, walk toward where the  
sun rises.  
We tire, we sleep, we eat, we walk in the path. Again and  
again.  
But never we see the end of thee.

“ I, and the other mighty hunters, follow a wounded elephant,  
Who goes to sleep where the sun goes to sleep.  
For many, many days we run, until our feet are weary and  
our hearts fail.  
But never we see the end of thee.

"I, and some other daring youths, go on this side and that side,  
As far as the *Okwapi* goes, and the *Sori* and the *Ngurube*.  
Their tracks we follow until the breath leaves our mouths  
Until we come where the evil spirits dwell.  
But do we ever see the end of thee ?

"Oh, Great Mother Forest !"

This is the song that the Chief Musician sings when the day's hunting has been good, and a ripe moon bathes in silver the little round huts that cling to the edges of the forest clearing.

As he sings, he dances ; and to steps and notes he gives the measure with the rhythmic *clack, clack-clack* of a soft-wood stick beaten against a hollow piece of hard timber.

The Mambuti Pygmies of the little tribe—a score or two—squat on the ground around the living mummies of their old ones, in the warmth of a huge triangular fire.

The song's enchantment possesses them. Now a pair of clapping hands picks up the rhythm ; now two feet beat it out upon the hard, tramped earth. Now a body, small, muscular, shining as polished copper shines, rises to express it in the steps of a dance, and dies into instant immobility ; as the voices of all the group, underlining the end of every strophe with a slow, unisonous *woo-woo*, rise and die, instinctively and automatically.

The brown, liquid eyes of the Mambuti hunters, usually so brightly cheerful and care-free, swim now in an unfathomable sadness, are fixed nowhere ; following the simple, moving dream they are dreaming. Their thoughts are wandering far, far away, along the paths, through the clearings, in the tracks of the footprints they know, and of so many others they do not know. Perhaps, in their childish



primitiveness, they are feeling how infinitesimally small and lost and crushed they are in the fearfully immense bosom of that forest that the ancient song calls their "Great Mother."

This is the Ituri, the beginning of the evergreen equatorial rain forest, of the infinite ocean of vegetation whose overpowering waves, rolling past the few islands of civilisation scattered here and there, cross all Central Africa to reach the shores of the Atlantic.

This is the kingdom of darkness, silence, mystery. Its green dome is rent only here and there by a small clearing, by a little aperture made by the fall of some gigantic tree, struck by lightning or consumed by age, or where a slow stream has created a diminutive swamp which forbids the growth of the heavy vegetation.

It is only through these rare apertures that the rays of the sun or the twinkling of the stars can pass. But none too often is their light present, for over the huge mass of the forest the sky seems to be in almost perpetual convulsion. For the greater part of the time only clouds look down through the dome of the forest; heavy clouds, black and threatening during the day, milky and whitish during the night, always galloping in disorderly confusion under the impulse of the wind, often discharging sudden, violent storms, which beat noisily upon the expanse of leaves amidst a continuous succession of rolling thunder.

This is a world of which man has been, until to-day, able to attack solely the external part, a vast strip, irregularly circular, hundreds of miles in depth at some points, only a few yards at others.

Here, since immemorable times, the Mambuti

Pygmies have found their hunting territories, have lived the independent, precarious life of the man of the bush. Here, later, natives of the Bantu type began to follow timidly the tracks of the pygmies, to find game and wood, wild vegetables and fruits. Finally, a few years ago, the whites came and, with the guidance of the pygmies and the labour of the other natives, cut right and left to open roads and big clearings where they could build posts and mines and towns.

But the interior part, what can well be called the heart of the forest, has been touched as yet by no one. Thousands of square miles which no white has as yet explored, which no native has dared to enter, whose borders not even the pygmies, the true sons of the forest, have ever had the courage to pass. Fear and superstition created these mental borders, which only exceptionally are marked by a river, a swamp or a clearing. But their power is so strong that, even when no visible sign denotes their position, no native will cross them.

"*Bwana*," they murmur, "we must return."

In the indescribable muddle of the vegetation everything looks the same; no change can be distinguished beyond the point where the pygmies stop and the porters of the caravan suddenly and simultaneously drop their loads.

"*Bwana*," insist the pygmies, "there, is death."

And their laughing, childish faces grow grave and serious.

One doesn't feel, doesn't see, anything different; but the inexorable border exists, even if only in their own minds. And if one determines to pass it, it usually means that he is left alone and lost in the

forest, for at his first attempt to advance, guides and porters, otherwise good and reliable, will take to their heels, crazed with terror.

Why? Because there, according to pygmies and other natives, live some of the most terrifying creatures the human mind could imagine.

One is a bird so enormous and powerful that in one instant it can reduce to a pulp the strongest man; and it is absolutely invulnerable because of a cuirass of thick, heavy hair, covering the whole body except for the feathered wings.

Another is an antelope somewhat resembling the Okapi, but having one long spiral horn in the middle of the forehead, and this animal is more ferocious than an infuriated rhino.

Another again, and the worst of all, is a big animal with a coat of long hair, black on the back, white on the other parts of the body. And it is enough to be seen by this monster, for one to die in the most atrocious agony.

Then there are the white pygmy elephants, with tusks as sharp as knives and a trumpeting which brings instant death to anyone who hears it.

And fantastic men having the coarse hair, the long arms, the superhuman strength of the gorilla, who beat to death with their huge stone knives anybody daring to enter their domain.

And there are other creatures, all so enormous in size, so strange in feature, so ferocious and cruel in character, that one cannot even describe them for lack of comparatives.

Ridiculous fantasies of ignorant natives, one may say. And so they certainly are, in part. But twelve years spent in African exploration have taught me

that these superstitions, these fears, are never born from thin air. Even if tremendously exaggerated by the minds of primitive men, there is always a basis, a reason, which has caused them.

More than anywhere else, this is true here in this region, which, it is not a poetic licence to say, belongs to the immemorial times of prehistory. Entering it, the white man suddenly feels cut off from all the rest of the earth. In time as well as in space. At once he has a deep impression of intruding upon a world which has lain here unchanged, intact, since the beginning of days.

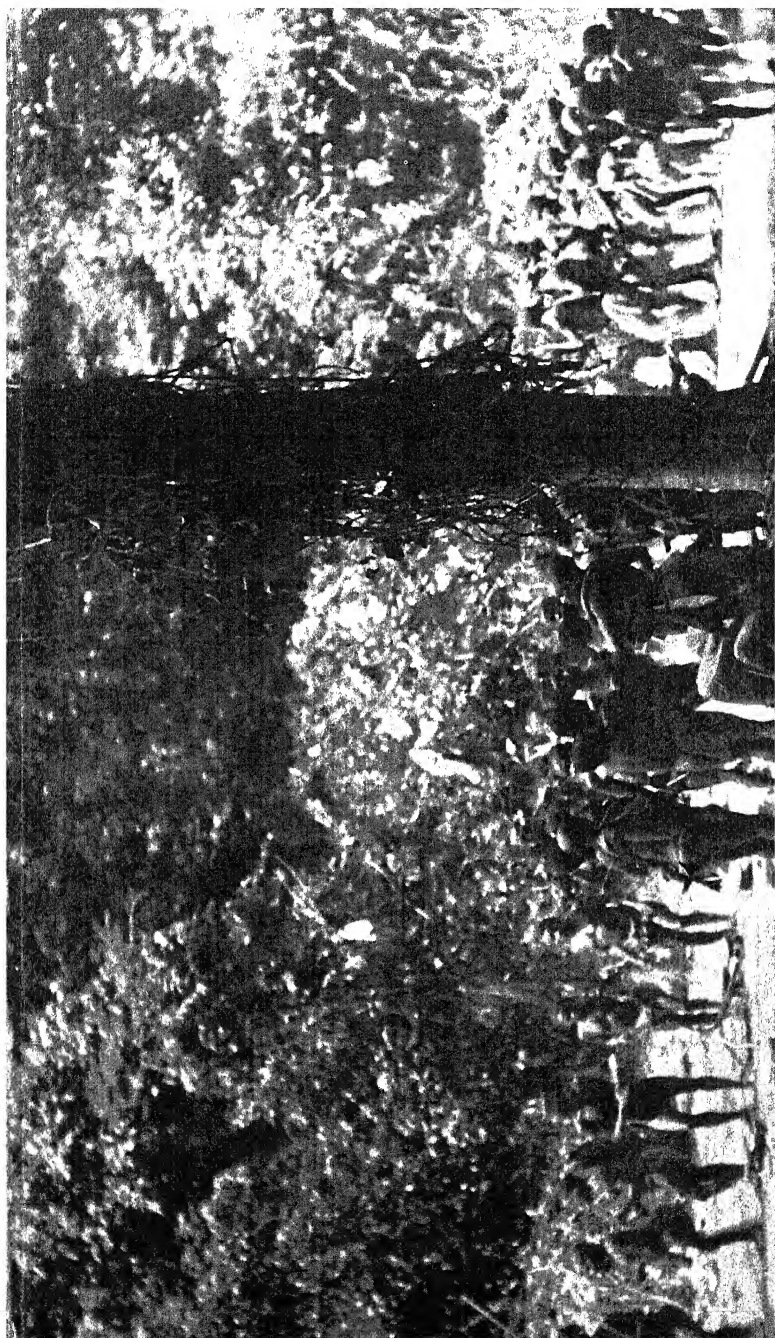
And this is not a mere impression, either. It is an actual reality.

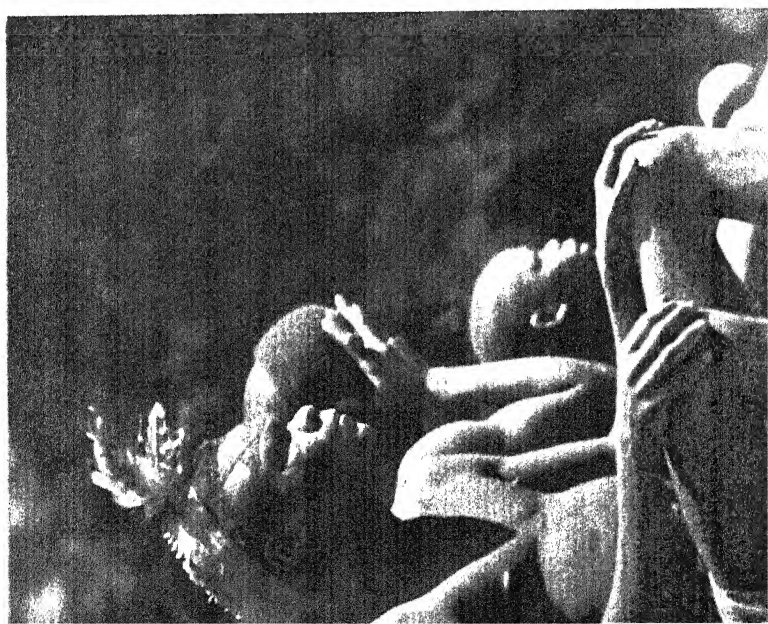
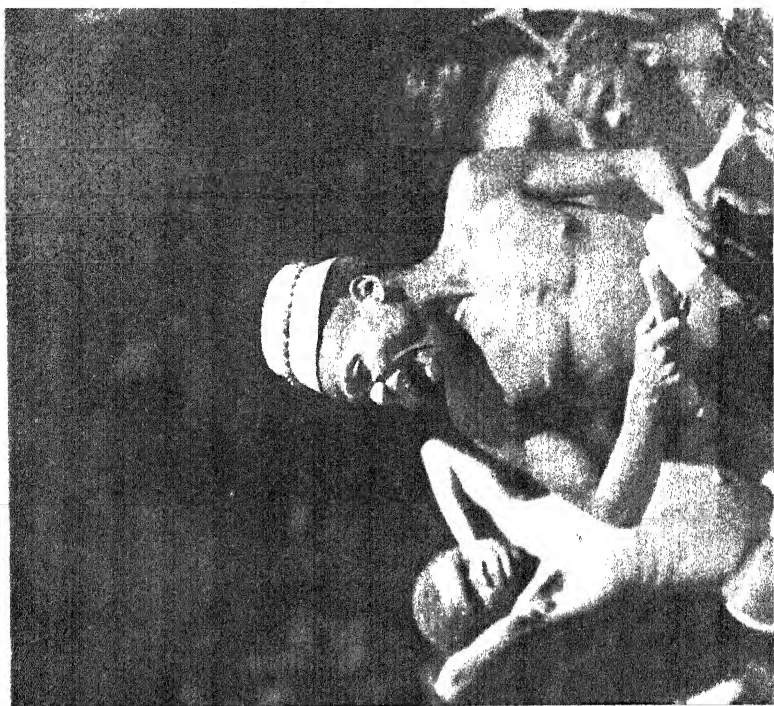
For behind the almost impregnable defence of her wall of gloomily silent darkness and crazily tangled vegetation, the forest knows how to hold her own secrets against time and man. Only during the last half-century, under the hard-headed persistency of the white man, has she unwillingly yielded a few of these secrets, grumblingly revealed some of the inhabitants of her domain. And each one of these creatures so brought to light has proved to be a being strange, unexpected and unique.

Some are animals belonging to species disseminated in many other parts of Africa. But here, in the forest, they have assumed dwarfed proportions, as the pygmy antelope, the pygmy buffalo and the pygmy elephant; or have doubled their size, as the giant gorilla, the giant aardvark and the giant hog.

Some are creatures which since long ages have disappeared from every other country, and which can be found in certain parts of the world to-day only in a fossilized state, as stone monuments

**[Facing: MAMBUTI PYOMIES, HAPPY LITTLE PIXIES,  
DANCE IN THEIR FOREST KINGDOM**





sculptured from life and by life with the chisel of death and time. Of such are the horned chameleon, the giant earth-pig, the hylochoerus, whose ancestors dwelt in Europe and Asia during the Pliocene period ; and, most striking of all these "living fossils," the okapi, almost indistinguishable from the Samotherium which lived in Greece something like fifteen million years ago.

\* \* \* \* \*

This immense *tabu* part of the Ituri, Kibali and Epulu forests, this corner of the world that has crystallized in its immutability for hundreds of centuries, is to be found in the 1 : 250·000 map of the Great Reef, represented by some square inches of desolate white, which the cartographer, with bureaucratic coldness, has labelled with the one word, "inaccessible."

One who looks at this same map is brought back from romance to reality by the tiny red line that, toward the middle, runs from south to north to mark the borders between Belgian Congo and British East Africa. It cuts in two all the length of Lake Tanganyika ; protrudes eastward to include on the Belgian side the mandate territory of Rwanda-Urundi ; returns to its original direction to divide into two unequal parts the Lake Edward ; crosses the Equator ; zigzags up toward the high peaks of the Ruwenzori ; descends to join the muddy waters of the Semliki river, and with them dips into the Lake Albert ; traverses the lake throughout all its length, and finally comes to an end at the southernmost borders of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, where the Bahr el Jebel and the Victoria Nile begin their majestic courses.

[Facing: left MAMBUTI PYGMY IN HIS HUNTING PAINTINGS  
right THE CHIEF MUSICIAN SINGS, FOR THE DAY'S  
HUNTING HAS BEEN GOOD

On the sheets before me there is another line, blue, thicker and longer, that I have traced myself during the dampest and foggiest London day of November, 1933, to mark the approximate itinerary of my new venture, the Eighth Gatti African Expedition, which was to leave Tilbury on December 29th of that year.

The blue line begins at Mombasa, where the ss. *Llandaff Castle* was to disgorge ourselves and all our material on January 21st, 1934; crosses all Kenya toward N.N.W., up to the Lake Rudolph, reaches the Karamoja borders of Uganda, surrounds all the northern part of Lake Victoria, then dives down toward the south, traversing Rwanda-Urundi to reach Usumbura, its capital. Having run literally along the northern shores of Lake Tanganyika to Uvira, our itinerary suddenly swerves north toward the home of the Giant Gorilla of the mountains, just west of Lake Kivu; finds its way among the hundred islands of this delightful "Swiss" lake; runs through the game plains of the Parc National Albert; leaves Lake Edward to its right and the Alpine Lubero behind, then climbs to the feet of the Mountains of the Moon. Immediately thereafter it breaks down into a line of dots, as it reaches a huge zone uniformly and solely covered with oval green signs. Not a town, nor the post of an official; not a mission, nor even a small native village are marked there. Only two words, "dense forest," denominate and define those several thousands of square miles that, from the Lubero-Irumu road, run west, straddling the great Ituri River.

A little farther in that direction the 29° 30' meridian of longitude East, finds itself lost in the whiteness of the map, in complete solitude but for a few sentences



casually written here and there : "Limit of forest unknown," "Very dense forest," "Unexplored country." It seems absurd to-day to speak about Darkest Africa, unexplored, unknown, mysterious. Still, there it is, not at all a tale belonging to the past.

Finally, another sentence : "Inaccessible country covered with dense forest." Against these printed words, so grim in their absolutely white surroundings, I had, that day in London, the decency of stopping even the dotted line. But beneath them, in pencil, I wrote, "Our Base Camp," with a very hopeful, but quite doubtful, question mark ; and "Hic sunt Ocapiaë," followed by an energetic series of exclamation points.

And I was right, too. For experience proved that in that "dense forest," where they had never been disturbed before by any human being, thousands of Okapi had made their home. And at the end of 1934 I was able to say that we had reached the main purpose of the expedition, as we had succeeded in finding out all the habits and features of the life of this strange animal, in photographing several specimens in freedom, and in capturing others, both young and adult.

My ambitious programme had also many other aims, which can be chronologically resumed as follows :

To search for, and to capture alive, some specimens of an antelope still unknown, which I had once seen on the northern shores of Lake Rudolph.

To continue in the mountains west of Lake Kivu the study I had already made there during my last two expeditions on the Giant Gorilla of the

mountains ; this time not attempting to obtain any specimens, but to photograph the great apes in their natural life, so little of which is as yet known.

To get some live specimens of the Congo race of Bongo antelope, which no one had yet succeeded in bringing to captivity in Europe.

Finally, to find out something, during our long stay in the forest, regarding some of the mythical, nightmare monsters of which so many tales had been told to me by old pygmy chiefs and witch-doctors.

In the first months of our venture—Eric Dugdale, of Cirencester, and Dennis Whetham, of Nairobi, accompanied us then ; later I remained alone with my wife—I was impressed once more with the hopelessness of making too exact a schedule for an African expedition. Some of our quests on which I had built long-thought hopes, crumbled down into unexpected disillusion. Some others, seemingly so easily reachable, proved extremely difficult and complicated. While golden opportunities popped out when least expected, and some of them I was able to grasp with eager quickness.

Two years have now passed since that damp and foggy London day of November, 1933, when dreamily my pencil broke the white virginity of the map with three words, " Our Base Camp," and a big question mark. And the mud-house in which I am beginning to write down the life of the expedition occupies the centre of a wide clearing situated, so far as I can ascertain with the few instruments at my disposal, almost exactly where the  $0^{\circ} 50'$  parallel of latitude North meets in the white space of the map the  $29^{\circ} 30'$  meridian of longitude East.

In that exact point on the map the " U " of

“Unknown” is printed. There, in the forest, lays our Base Camp that during so many months the ardour of the equatorial sun has baked, and the fury of the forest hurricane has flooded; that the songs of hundreds of unknown birds and the shrieks of all the friendly tribes of monkeys and chimpanzees have filled by day; and that has often resounded at night with the good-humoured trumpeting of pygmy elephants or the bloodcurdling love-cries of gigantic leopards.

There, when we are not away for field work, at night the anachronistic *tuff-tuff-tuff* of our electricity plant lulls us to sleep; and our reveille is sounded at dawn by the “thumbless monkeys,” the colubus, clad in their rich fur suits of silky black and white, faithfully repeating their cries from group to group—the “cock’s crow” of Great Mother Forest.

## CHAPTER TWO

### KAKITUMBA

EACH of us seized a camp-chair and with a groan of satisfaction dropped heavily into it.

"Two-thirty," grumbled Eric.

"A tin of sardines?" inquired Dennis.

"Ssssh!" I hissed venomously at a group of our boys who were making a racket near my wife's tent.

"What about some salmon?" I suggested.

Dennis's voice was muffled by fatigue, by some bread, and by half the contents of the sardine tin.

"Sorry . . . eighteen hours I am not eating . . . here is the salmon."

The remaining half of the fishes from Spain had strongly appealed to Eric's fishing mania and kept him busy and silent for another few minutes. Then, "Ellen is not eating anything?" he asked.

No, my wife had been unable to stand another minute. Her bed was barely made when she fell on it, dressed as she was, exhausted by that long, long day of driving and working and perspiring, actually her first day of camp life—in Africa or anywhere else.

"Well, now we can really say that the expedition has begun and . . ."

If he had wanted to say something more, Eric forgot it on the spot. Suddenly electrified, he jumped to his feet.

"Hear that?" he demanded.

Far away on our right a roar had broken the silence of the black night; from nearby a second roar had immediately answered it.

"Lions," I remarked, with the mild nonchalance of one who has had many years of Africa, and is not averse to letting his companions remember it.

A third lion took up the call, so near this time that Eric and Dennis quickly turned their heads, their eyes striving to pierce the blackness around us.

"Lions!" they both exclaimed, with all the excitement of the first experience.

But Canada and her salmon were at the moment more engrossing for me than Africa and all her felines.

"Lions," I repeated, not very brilliantly, conscientiously cleaning the tin.

On our left a last roar far, far away concluded an African welcome that seemed too extraordinarily tactful to be true.

Dugdale's eyes were shining. The attractions of a good, new clean camp-bed and the thrills of an even newer lion hunt in the night were evidently fighting a deadly battle in his mind.

But no further roars sounded. Instead, a boy brought three lighted hurricane lamps.

Eric, much of his excitement subsided, uttered a "Simply ripping!" which wanted to be still enthusiastic but died in a hearty yawn. The bed had won.

A collection of empty tins on the folding table and three empty chairs remained alone in the middle of the camp. If they chose, lions could come by the dozens to smell them and search optimistically for

some fragments of fish and meat. Nobody would stir in the four tents until the sun, late the next morning, would have transformed those tents into baking ovens.

That first day had been a hard one. In the morning we had risen before dawn could reach even the top of the mountain where the picturesque little Kiwale Hotel lies hidden in flowers. We had slept there our last East African night, and we were certainly happy that it was the last one. To depart from Kenya and Uganda meant for us the end of the amazing mileage of red tape which had hampered every movement and plan we had made in the previous fifteen days. It meant leaving behind the many unhelpful and not too kind officials and all their cohorts of sulky Indian clerks and assistants, specialised in insolent obstructionism, that make East Africa the only British Possession where the traveller finds himself unwelcome, treated with scant courtesy in every way.

And if, before night, we could put the border behind us it would mean that that evening we could eat and sleep in our own beautiful, comfortable camp, as finally we would be free to open our baggage. Nearly three hundred packages in all, which I had been obliged to have sealed on landing at Kilindini ; deciding quickly that it was better to cancel completely our trip to Lake Rudolph if I did not want to spend three or four days in Mombasa filling with the most elaborate calculations and estimates some dozens of declarations, agreeing to use all my cash in paying customs deposits and entrance rights for a part of our material, and summoning a whole bank to give bond for the remainder.

That is why on that morning of February 7th, 1934, our ungainly box-body and two big overloaded trucks were already chugging to heat up the engines before the sun could paint his first pink stroke on the waxen sky. And his first pale light had just revealed the cloudy pearl of Lake Nabugaba when we were already rolling down the hill toward Masaka, giving not even a last glance to the tiny spiral of smoke still rising from the shore of the lake as an ethereal funeral monument to the boat built by the London film people for some scene of "Sanders of the River" which a few days before had met an unexpectedly glorious end in flames.

On the rest of the road to Mbarara and the border, there was nothing for us to notice except the complete absence of any signposts, especially at the most puzzling bifurcations. And the only too abundant and continuous presence of those dangerous bolides which are the scandal of that, as of any other Uganda road—the heavy, noisy, rattling trucks with planks and bales carelessly protruding from every side, and rotten tyres apt to explode at any minute and usually no brakes at all, which bearded, turbaned Indians drive at fantastic speeds, zigzagging along the middle of the road at the head of huge clouds of red dust and pestilential gas.<sup>1</sup>

Some saint, certainly not belonging to the Uganda Police, uninterested in such details, having protected us from the Indian masters and tyrants of the road ; and some other, surely not enlisted in the Public

<sup>1</sup> The large increase in fatal road accidents in Uganda deserves serious attention. For the whole of 1934 there were 408 accidents, involving 48 deaths. For 1935, during the first six months only, accidents reported are 375, with 308 persons injured and 54 killed. The death toll, therefore, has increased by 125 per cent.

Works Department, having helped us solve the various bifurcation-puzzles, even in spite of all the incorrect indications carefully listed in the Road Book of the East African Automobile Association, in the sweltering heat of the noonday sun we finally arrived at Kakitumba Bridge.

There, three colonies meet. Uganda with a last expanse of low mountains, all equally bare and hostile, and a last specimen of her Goan customs officers. The particular one living there, by nature and inclination would look very much like the mountains; but at the approach of a car he hurriedly puts on an ex-white coat and a toothful snarl in function as a smile for—of course—invariably you are arriving outside of “office hours,” and he can charge you 2s. 6d. for his trouble, “yes, please.”

Tanganyika, with some even more miserably naked hills and a signpost presenting you with a well-varied *hors d'œuvre* to the full banquet of punishments, prosecutions, fines, etc., etc., to which you are cordially invited if you trespass, if you shoot, if you sneeze, if you clean your pipe against a rock in Mandate Territory.

And Rwanda-Urundi, a discreetly deceptive country that keeps behind her all the magnificence of her majestic mountains and glittering lakes, to appear at this gathering of colonies with some hills that then, at the end of the dry season, recent grass fires had enveloped in a black mourning cape. What Rwanda does, however, is to welcome the visitor with a white official, for in Belgian Congo and mandate territories no individual of other races has governmental—or other—authority.

We see him waiting for us on the other side of the



little and so international bridge. But first we have to reckon with the Uganda Goan. Case by case, bale by bale, all our baggage he wants to check.

Every single package of it? "Yes, please."

But what is he afraid of, that we might have opened some? "No, please."

Poor devil! after all, it isn't his fault. He tells me in confidence, "yes, please," that the Mombasa customs superintendent, or whatever the title is, has written him with strict orders to look and see if *all* the wires are intact, if *all* the seals are there, and *really* the right seals.

And the poor Goan doesn't want to be kicked out of the service, "no, please," so he checks everything. At the end of three hours everything is found to be in order, including the 7s. 6d. for extra work, "thank you, please."

So Kenya and Uganda have managed to be unpleasant and inhospitable from border to border. The prehistoric dirty coaches of the Kenya and Uganda railways; the roads, as for example the Mombasa-Nairobi, kept in appalling condition to allow the railways exorbitant profits; highly-priced and miserably supplied shops; the Indian speed-fiends and the Goan customs officers with their unbearable "yes, please"; "no, please," may wait for some other green visitor; and continue to wonder why tourists and hunting and exploring parties are more and more avoiding East Africa and its clans of white hunters and *safari*-arranging bureaus.

As for myself, for the first time I am well happy at leaving British territory.

Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, South-West Africa, and most particularly, South Africa,

where are you, with your beautifully organised, marvellously equipped railways, your helpful, energetic officials, your kind, generous hospitality, your general attitude so courteous and wide-minded that the stranger has only to come to you to feel immediately, comfortably at home, at once to desire never to go away?

However, in front of us, finally, there is another most pleasant and hospitable country. Its door is opened by the white barrier that the lonely Belgian official has ordered lifted in the rapidly approaching sunset.

Mr. Leroy for three years has lived absolutely alone there with his duty; and by character and profession he is so attached to it that, I learned, afterward, he spends several minutes in calculations and figures each time he buys food at the Indian store on the Uganda side in order to charge himself the few cents of customs rights.

He is not an easy-going man, he is even severe. But kind and considerate, too. And we are so surprised to find again an official who trusts our word, that we make our declarations even more carefully and conscientiously. In a few minutes we have finished; and Mr. Leroy locks his office, with his duty and his official face inside, and transforms himself into a charming host, while in his house we empty some cups of good coffee and break his long fast of company.

"Be careful of lions," he repeats before we leave. "You laugh, eh? Well, look here."

In the little, rather bare, garden behind the red brick house—hippos roam there almost every night to eat the flowers and vegetables—the ground clearly tells of the nervous paces of three big lions.

"From two to five they kept me awake this morning. See?"

Yes, I see.

I see also the eye of my wife.

"Listen," she tells me, when we are once more in the car running quickly to pick up a spot for camp before complete darkness has fallen, "I suppose it is indispensable that I spend my first night in a tent in the exact centre of a country crawling with beastly lions?"

But the beastly lions were "very decent," as Eric would say in his best Oxford accent. Very decent, both that evening while we unpacked and unpacked and unpacked, and during the following week which we passed on the flat top of that hill at thirteen kilometres from the borders in order to check and put in order all our equipment.

Lions we could see several times during the day in the valley below us; and we could often hear them at night, giving their dramatic calls in the distance, or prowling in the vicinity of the camp.

But nothing unpleasant ever happened, either to us, who after the second day grew perfectly accustomed to this constant propinquity; or to the lions, who became perfectly familiar with the fires we kept near every tent, but eluded very successfully the two or three attempts that Eric made on them, not to lose the opportunity of beginning at once his beloved collections.

For to bag a couple of exceptionally good specimens of lions, of buffaloes and of elephants was his greatest personal desire in the expedition. His other aim, manifested by a whole array of rods, nets, flies and whatnot, was the capture of monstrously big fish in

every lake and river he would meet, both in order to beat his father's African record and to bring a valuable contribution to our mess. As a parenthesis, however, I must add that the record remained safely with Mr. Dugdale, Senr., for a huge uneatable object caught in Lake Victoria just a few days before our arrival there; and the only piscine marvels which ever appeared on our table were the salmon, sardines and tunny fish from their multi-coloured tins.

As for the programme of the expedition, the first blow of cancelling the Lake Rudolph journey, was followed by a second and much more serious one, when at the Kakitumba camp I received the confirmation that my permit to capture alive and export to England two Okapi had been withdrawn, the Colonial Ministry having discovered after we had left London "that other dispositions have been already taken in the past to promise a pair of Okapi to the London Zoological Society."

To get my permit, however, I had spent months in trips to Brussels; in long discussions with the Colonial Minister and the head of the Department of Agriculture, and in endless diplomatic formalities. And, once finally obtained, I had based all the organisation of the expedition primarily upon the Okapi work in the forest. Worst of all, the eight thousand pounds necessary for the expedition had been supplied in good part by English, American, South African, Italian and French publishers and newspapers, under the form of advances toward the book and articles they had commissioned from me, especially on the Okapi as the most interesting subject of our work.

The sudden withdrawal of that permit would, therefore, have meant disaster for me. But I was sure that only some error had provoked it ; and I knew too well, by past experience, the correct attitude and helpfulness of the Belgian Colonial authorities not to be perfectly confident that the mistake would be rectified as soon as my protest would be presented to the Minister.

But how many weeks would the necessary steps consume ? And what was the best thing to do meanwhile, not to lose precious time ?

The best answer to the second question, at least, came soon afterward via an invitation to spend a few months in Rwanda among the Giant Watussi, a people whom I knew from a previous, too-short acquaintance and had found utterly fascinating.

So, forgetting for the time being the "living fossils" of the forest, we started southward toward the country of the "living Pharaohs."

And Rwanda, although it can easily be reached from the four cardinal points, is still so little known to the world that I thought it would be interesting for the reader to accompany us, first of all, to that kingdom of peace and harmony ; to share our experiences and observations, which make no pretence to be sensational discoveries, but only seek to contribute to the better knowledge of a people which in the very centre of Africa perpetuates the memory of Ancient Egypt.

## CHAPTER THREE

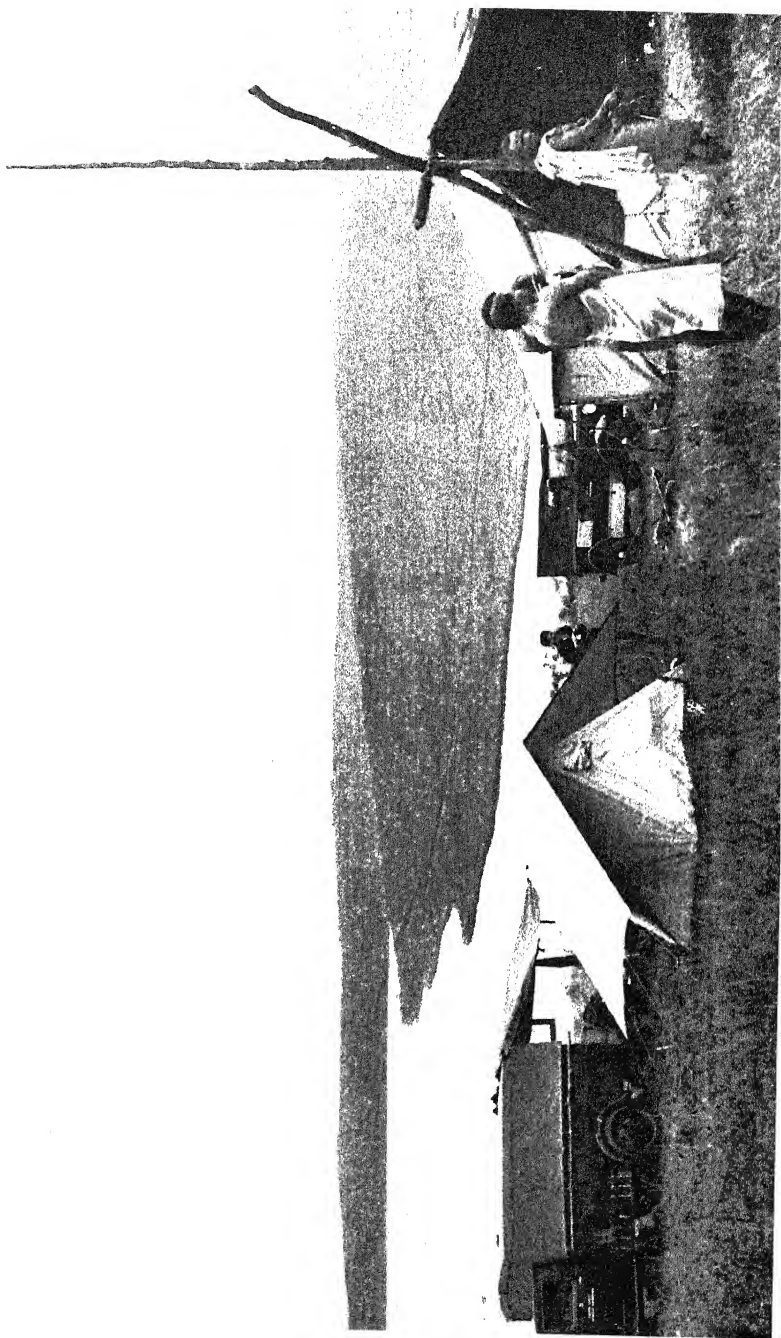
### THE "LIVING PHARAOHS"

HAVING done my best with a number of partridges which had lured me up the mountainside, I came back to the road where my wife awaited me in the car. When I had left her a few minutes before, the entire country as far as one could see had been empty of human beings. Now it seemed crowded with people. Above all, and well above the roof of the car, appeared the erect, handsome head of a Butussi<sup>1</sup> prince, crowned by the two curved crests of its elaborate coiffure. Approaching this striking young man, seven and a half feet in height, clad in a long white spotless toga, starred with vermilion suns and accentuating the slenderness and grace of his person, my own six feet seemed suddenly and inconveniently to have shrunk. I felt heavy, short, gauche.

"*Amashyo*"—"May you have a great herd of cattle"—I saluted, for the Watussi code of courtesy forbids a man to be the first to address one whom he considers his superior in rank.

"*Amashongore*"—"May you have many cows"—replied the giant. The bow with which he accompanied the traditional salutation was of a finesse that would not be out of place at the court of St. James. The smile of pleasure with which he welcomed my acknowledgment of Watussi customs illuminated

<sup>1</sup> Butussi, singular of Watussi.







his copper-tinted face, with its sympathetic, intelligent, thoughtful expression. His forehead was high and smooth, his long eyelashes veiling somewhat the brilliance of a big pair of eyes the colour of burnt coffee. His long, high-bridged nose marked him for the born aristocrat he was. His jaw was not prognathous, but Semitic in cast, the lips well cut and displaying a beauty of white, shining teeth. A small, black pointed beard harmoniously completed the ascetic triangle of his head.

"What does this decorative creature want?" demanded my wife. "I asked him, but I can't understand a word he says. He's been standing there like a statue ever since you left."

The Butussi did not know a single word of English, of course, but he understood the question.

"I passed," he said simply, in his respectful manner, "I saw that Madame was left alone. I remained as an escort until your return. *Ayee amahoroyee* (the peace be with you)."

Another bow, and he turned and left us with his light, elastic step; that aura of dignity—I would dare to say, majesty—that he emanated, keeping at three yard's distance his retinue of servants, Bahutu archers and Batwa pygmy litter-bearers, who hastened to take behind him their customary place.

A trifling episode, but it remained well clear in our minds, as it gave us a first impression of that predominant courtesy which is one of the most salient characteristics of the Watussi, of that aristocracy of splendid men, which seems to have been created just to complete the harmony and magnificence of the country.

For since the first days of our trip, Rwanda had

revealed to us, one by one, some of her infinite and always varied beauties and riches. The gloomy black hills of Kakitumba had soon given place to the great undulating expanses of the Kagera reserve, teeming with antelopes and gazelles of every variety, which at our passage barely interrupted their grazing of the new grass following the fecundation of the fires. Gradually the hills, which the very good road continuously climbed up and down, had transformed themselves into mountains with more and more grandiose contours, topped by vast plumes of white clouds against the deep blue sky.

Lakes, lakes of silver, lakes of molten platinum, had begun to appear at the bottom of every valley, multiplying so extravagantly between the unending mountain chains that the eye could not even count them. Mohasi, Mugesera, Bilila, Lumila, Shoha, Sake, Kilimi, and hundreds of others, all taking the most strange forms as they push like so many tentacles into every depression of the ground. And all covered by clouds of aquatic birds, their shining plumage gleaming in the brilliant sun.

Reflected in the polished mirrors of some of these lakes, we saw the small towns, posts and missions, perched high on the tops of mountains : Gabiro, Lugarama, Gahine, Rwamagana, Kigali, Kabgaye ; while the road continued to bring us every day unceasing crescendos of vision, always new sights, one more immense, magnificent and glorious than the last. Until we arrived at Nyanza, where we had decided to make a long stop, as there, surrounded by a court which still conserves much of its past splendour, lives King Rudahigwa.

To this court continually come from every province

great and small chiefs, sorcerers and dignitaries of the traditional cults, as well as the best dancers and musicians, and the most famous troubadours and story-tellers of the whole country. It is therefore of all Rwanda the most propitious place for one having a relatively short time at disposal and wanting to make a study of the Watussi.

A few people only have some knowledge of the present customs and life of the Watussi ; and regarding their origin and arrival in the country, no one has ever been able to advance anything but vague hypotheses. That they are the children of the ancient Egyptian civilisation seems to me absolutely certain, both for their striking somatic resemblance to the Pharaohs and for the affinity of their pastoral habits and their customs. Although they have adopted many of the usages of the country they have invaded and conquered at some more or less remote past, the Watussi observe many others unknown to all the peoples surrounding Rwanda, and which seem to prove at least their community of origin with the ancient Egyptians.

They are the only race in Central Africa to read the future in the intestines of chicks ; to classify animals into pure and impure. Their royal dynasty is believed to be of celestial origin, as was that of the Pharaohs ; their political organisation is of feudal system, an absolute monarchy with unlimited power, hierarchical to the maximum. Their various clans have animals for totems. Their cows, fine creatures, with their gigantic horns and intelligent expressions, are of a breed that has nothing to do with the original races of the surrounding country and can only be compared with the oxen reproduced

on Egyptian monuments. And the care they give to their cattle seems to be a remainder of the cult of the Egyptians for the Apis.

The epoch in which the Watussi arrived in Rwanda is another mystery. Of each one of the thirty-eight predecessors claimed by the reigning king, the *Abachurubwengwe*, the "Makers of Intelligence" attached to the court, can give the name and a complete biography; although the lives of the very first princes, Muntu, Kazi, Kimanuka and Gahanga, seem to partake more of romance than of history.

However, kings of other dynasties have reigned even before the present one, and the theory which seems to me to be the most plausible is that in very ancient times a group of rich cattle owners left the Pharaoh empire with their cattle, either to escape persecution or famine, or to seek new and better pastures. Proceeding slowly from country to country, probably continuously in warfare with belligerent populations, they finally reached Rwanda, where the beauty and the fecundity of the ground, the moderate, healthy climate, and the docile, inoffensive character of the inhabitants invited them to settle definitely.

This theory seems to me to receive corroboration from the fact that a Jesuit who travelled in the Unyoro almost four hundred years ago, left records that he had heard, as of a very ancient thing, of a prince who had run away from Abyssinia with several companions, some of whom had returned to their country many years later, passing by the Lake Victoria, at the south-west of which the rest of the party had remained.

The ethnical superiority of the Watussi certainly imposed itself on the Bahutu, the agricultural people,

who, without any serious political organisation, then occupied the country, leading the most primitive life. Conquered by the high stature, by the light-coloured skin and the beautiful manners of the Watussi, no less than by their superior intelligence, their diplomacy and good government, the Bahutu submitted easily and must have enjoyed a long era of peace.

Then excessive prosperity, and the thirst for power and greater riches that it invariably brings, fostered a division in the ranks of the conquerors, and there began dissensions, jealousies, reckless ambitions, leading to the separation of Rwanda into many small states and ever-changing confederations, continually fighting with each other. This is the fratricidal war which the "Makers of Intelligence" still recount to-day with such elaboration and precision of detail, and which went on for centuries until, with Kigeri IV Lwabugiri, the thirty-sixth king of the present dynasty, the long line of warriors came to an end and Rwanda was restored to its original unity.

It was under the reign of Lwabugiri that, in 1894, the Watussi received the first white visitor, the explorer, Count von Goetzen, and remained astonished and frightened before the strange creature whose colour they could not explain except by the belief that he nourished himself solely on milk, and continuously bathed his body in the same fluid.

To-day, only forty years later, the Watussi are perhaps of all Africa the people who have been best able to absorb the civilisation that Europeans have brought to their colonies.

These superb men, seven, seven feet and a half, sometimes nearly eight feet in height, slender, extremely elegant in every movement, of quick and

open intelligence, all princes and chiefs, constitute in the country an aristocracy of race as well as of mind and of body which, under the control of the Belgians, continues to govern the people at the orders of the king.

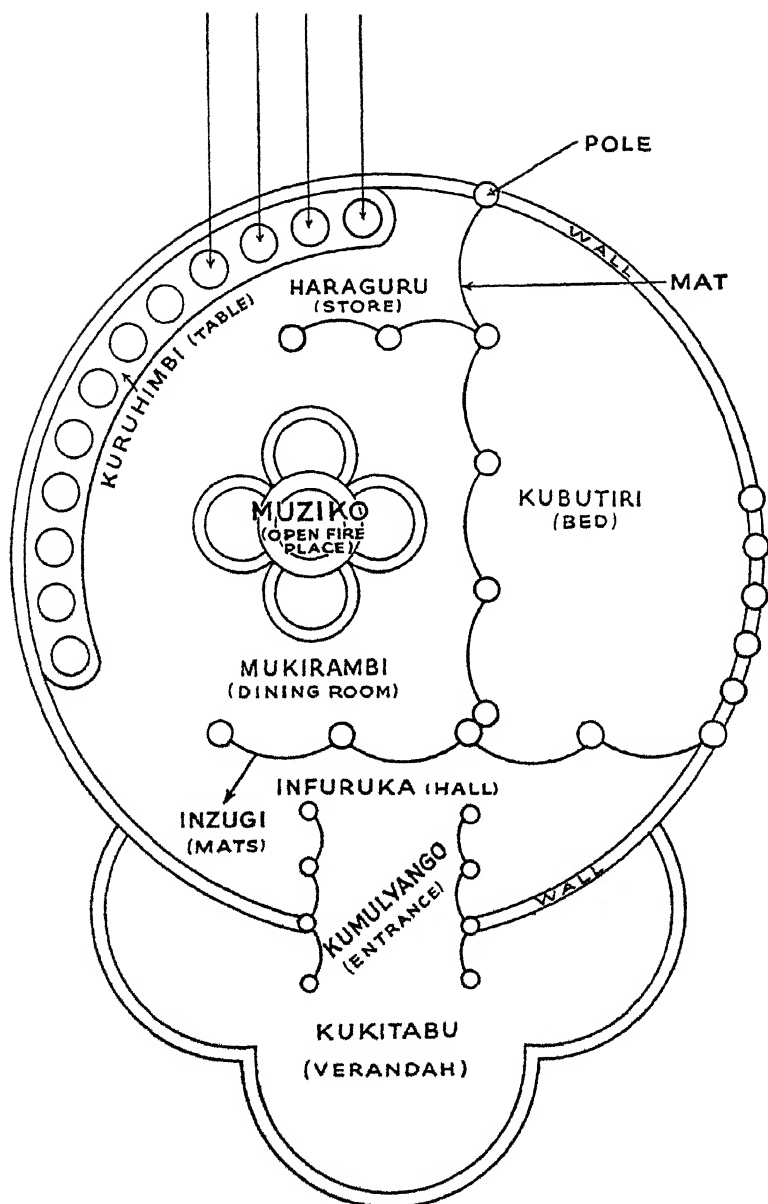
Faithful to the ancient traditions of the race, scrupulously they have conserved the *masunzu*, the elaborate coiffure so in keeping with the Semitic lines and the asceticism of their features.

Their house is still the *inzu* of their fathers, a big round hut divided into various chambers by a series of poles, each one of which keeps its traditional name, and by mats attached to the poles in the form of screens. In every house these convenient partitions, which do not impede the entrance of light and air, are used to define exactly the same rooms: the *kumulyango*, the entrance, fronted by a small veranda in the shape of three segments of a circle; the *infuruka*, a hall from which one can enter the *mukirambi*, where the family has its meals protected from any stranger's eye. To eat, in fact, is considered such an impurity, however necessary, that it can only be spoken of by the periphrasis of "washing one's hands," an allusion which comes from the operation which every Butussi performs invariably both before and after each meal.

In the centre of the *mukirambi* is the *muziko*, a circular plate of baked clay, in which food is cooked and which forms a solid piece with four other semi-circular plates, in which food is placed, chiefly milk and its products, honey, and exceptionally the meat of the cow, which is the only meat that no clan considers impure.

Along a good quarter of the circular wall of the

## MILK AND WATER POTS



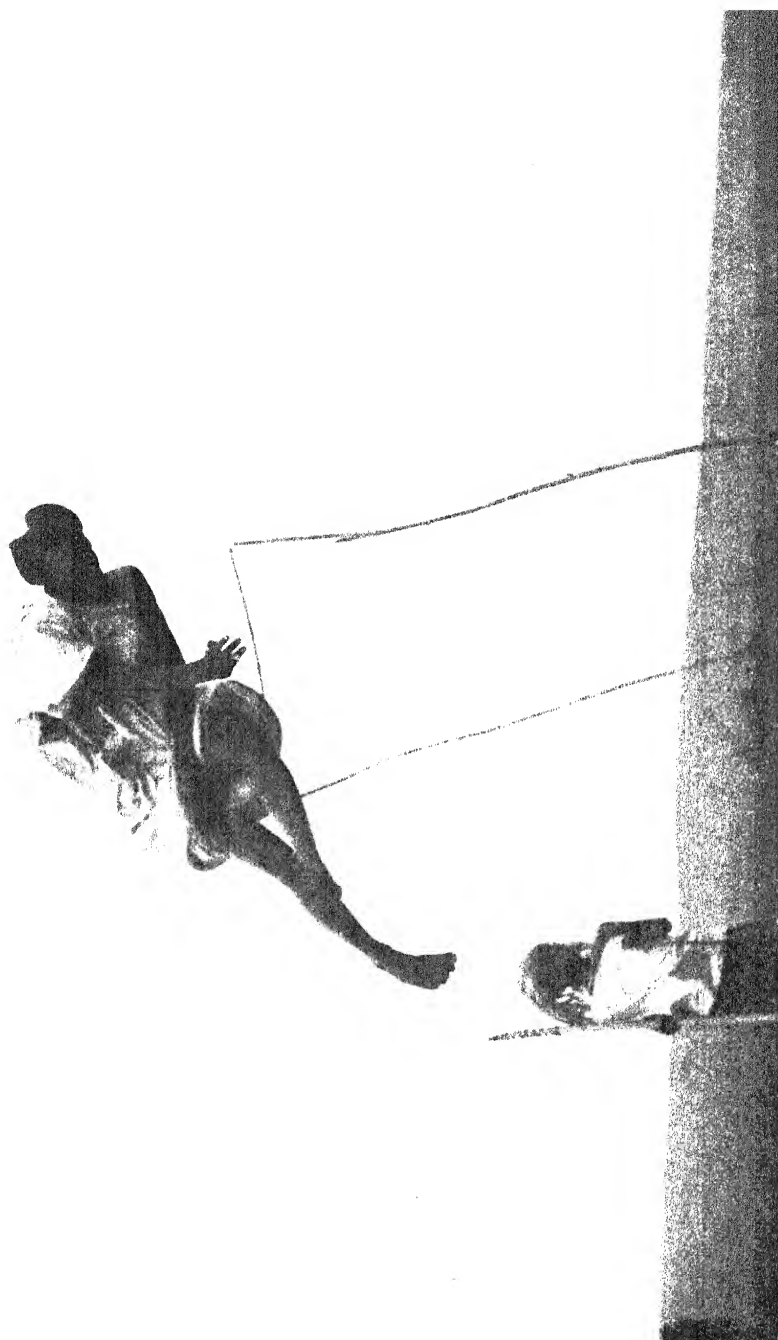
INTERIOR OF A WATUSSI HUT.

house runs a table, the *kuruhimbi*, where, clean, orderly and as carefully tended as if they were a treasure, are kept the *igichuba*, the huge wooden pots, painted white, in which water is drawn and milk stored. Above them, suspended in nets, are the *igisabo*, in which butter is made, and still higher the *igichuma*, small calabashes where the delicious beer made of milk and honey ferments. This table, the lower part concealed behind mats ornamented with the characteristic zigzagging designs in black and red, continues into the *haraguru*, the store for foods, which is adjacent to the *kubutiri*—literally, the bed—where the head of the household and his favourite wife of the moment sleep, each of the other wives living in a hut of her own, well far away in order to safeguard the independence and privacy of all.

Among the Watussi the wife is not the beast of burden she is with other natives, as, for instance, the Bahutu, the agriculturists, who constitute the mass of Rwanda's population and are the servants of the Watussi, or, even worse, among the Batwa, the pygmies who were formerly the slaves and executioners of the giants and still to-day are voluntary slaves, hunting, making pots, carrying litters and escorting the women for their masters.

The Watussi woman, who is very pretty, graceful and, strangely enough, of normal stature, is the mistress of the house, the cherished companion and consulted counsellor of the husband. To her are left all the cares of the house and kitchen, which she accomplishes with the aid of numerous Bahutu and Batwa servants, while the man supervises the menials tending his precious cattle, and devotes himself to







his duties as chief and to his preferred sports, hunting and competitions in the throwing of spears and arrows. And, while he is still young, to high-jumping and dancing, in which he trains himself methodically from childhood, with the great ambition of being sent one day to give an exhibition of his ability at court.

One day, near Gahine, at a gathering of princes we had an opportunity of seeing for ourselves the spectacular ability that can be achieved by the superb athletes hidden behind the indolent and nonchalant appearance of these pastoral chiefs.

Two reeds planted in the ground, a third used as a cross-piece, and a bit of ant-heap placed before them as a foothold, and the competition started. Tucking up their togas around their hips, the young Watussi, one by one, began to jump, the cross-piece set at four or five feet from the ground.

The sport, although of perfect grace, was not particularly striking, as it continued for a few minutes in the field of the normal. But when the great chief asked us to stand under the reed which had been raised to a good foot over our heads, and the jumpers, one after another in quick succession, began to fly well above us, the spectacle became really such as no Olympic games have ever seen.

The noiselessness of the young men in approaching the jump was such that once Dugdale, believing the competition to be finished, left his place and started toward the Chief. It was then that I saw a really beautiful thing. The Butussi, who just in that second was in the air above us at about eight feet from the ground, threw his body forward, stretched out his long thin legs and, elongating the jump by several

D

[*facing*: THE JUMPERS BEGAN TO FLY WELL ABOVE US

feet, landed lightly in good equilibrium, instantly turning to my companion to ask, apologetically, if he had brushed against him.

Elements and impulses of extremely diverse character, often seeming in complete antithesis, comprise the very nature of the Watussi. Less than half an hour later, without apparent transition, the same athletes who had run and jumped as naturally as birds fly, were transformed into the immobility of a group crowning the hill like a masterpiece of statuary. Grave and silent, their pastoral nature aroused in their innate deepest emotions, they were watching a ceremony during which herds of *inyambo* and *insanga* were exhibited.

The cattle of Rwanda is in keeping with the rest of the country and well worthy of admiration, but the striking animals passing before us made the word "cow" quite inadequate. The royal cows called *insanga*, "the ones which were found," because, according to tradition, one of the first kings of the present dynasty discovered them; and the sacred *inyambo*, "the cows with long, long horns," which in fact often measure twelve or more feet from point to point, were not only extremely beautiful, but perfectly conscious of their beauty and of the ornaments in pearls and sacred grass embellishing their necks, heads, tails and horns. They belong to a special, select race, easily distinguishable also by their intelligent eyes, and the sleek coats of unusual colours, particularly of a violet or greyish red, or half white and half black, or red, spotted with white.

To preserve the race in all its perfection, all the milk is left to the calves but for a small quantity reserved exclusively to the herdsmen, who belong to

a tribe with special duties and privileges. And the meat of these cows is strictly *tabu*: a belief considerably strengthened by the frequent massages given to the animals with crocodile blood, which is considered extremely poisonous.

Well nourished, their coats and horns shining beneath the sun, *inyambo* and *insanga* passed in review, under the orders of their custodians; advanced with an agile and dignified carriage, stopped before the highest chiefs as well-trained animals in a circus, listened complacently to the speech that each herdsman made in turn, with loud cries and wild gyrations, to recount all the marvels of the beasts in his care.

The Arcadian peace of the bucolic scene soon changed into a real pandemonium as the herdsmen, growing more and more excited, twirled in their sacred dances, beating the ground with their long sticks, fencing with them, feigning attacks and defences, emitting guttural shrieks that the cows, as the most interested spectators, completed with loud bellows, nodding approval with their fine little heads and enormous horns.

Watching with pleased amusement the amazement shown by our faces, and our flurry of running around to take photographs, the Watussi solemnly discussed among themselves the merits and beauties of each cow, using the hundreds of special terms that in the Banyarwanda language characterise their supreme interest in the cattle. Words conveying every possible nuance of colour, every length and kind of curve of horn and every good or bad physical or moral quality of a cow; and the hundreds of ways in which it was born or acquired or presented; of the number of calves it has produced and the quantity of milk

it has given—a full dictionary, all Greek to the white man, but the best fuel for daily conversation for the Watussi, who may toil for years to obtain from the King the great distinction of the present of an *insanga*, who sometimes arrive to the point of committing suicide because of the loss of an *inyambo*, who, even in the Batwa pygmies, have inspired such an awe of the cattle that these diminutive, primitive men to-day, in Rwanda, call the forest the “pygmies’ cow.”

And only through a comparison with the various points of the thoroughbred cattle can a Butussi prove himself to be a judge of feminine pulchritude. For the prettiest and smartest girl is, for him, the girl with the heaviest hindquarters, the longest, most triangular face, and the one who skilfully enhances her resemblance to the cow with the most realistic double-horned head-dress.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### WATUSSI LOVE

AMONG the Watussi, marriage, as one of life's most important factors, and the ceremonies preceding, accomplishing and accompanying it, as well as the events of various nature that may follow it, are, quite naturally, based on their traditional cult for the cattle or connected with it. And, as every other act of their existence, are regulated by a strict etiquette born of ancient superstitions and of their innate sense of finesse and form.

During our stay in Rwanda I had the opportunity of observing many steps and stages of several different marriages, and of learning from old and young Watussi many other details which, of course, I could not have seen for myself. To recount these separate episodes just as I saw them or learned of them would make, it seems to me, a tedious and confusing narrative, so I prefer to reconstruct a complete and typical marriage carried out in accordance with the best traditions.

During the last months old Sezikeye has spent many hours in discussing with his wife, Kabanyana, the future of their oldest son, handsome young Kamanzi. They know very well that between him and little Kankera exists a bond of reciprocal attraction and joyful affection. But the tradition says that it is the father alone whose wishes must be

considered in the selection of a bride for his son. So Sezikeye ignores all that he knows of his son's sentiments, and considering one by one all the eligible maidens; selects—just from his own mature and wise judgment—Kankera to be his future daughter-in-law.

First of all he must make sure that Gitsimbanyi, her father, is, in principle, agreeable to the match. The answer that the messengers bring back being favourable, Sezikeye one day pays an official visit, followed by all that he has been able to muster in the way of an imposing retinue. With him he brings a vast quantity of *inkangaza*, the princes' beer made from the fermentation of honey and milk, a beverage treacherously innocent, as I can affirm, for a cup of it once put me out of the fight for several hours.

Although the two old men, secreted in a cool room, drink and argue with equal gusto from morning to night, before the end of the meeting, and of the beer, they manage to reach an agreement. Between the usual minimum of one and the maximum of three cows—which would be royal *insanga* only in the case of a great chief—Sezikeye acquiesces in the payment of a dowry of two cows.

On the appointed day he picks up half a dozen head of the exact standard of cattle owned by Gitsimbanyi, so as not to offend or humiliate him, and sends them to the old man, asking him to choose the two he prefers.

Weeks pass; the two men meet often here and there but never refer to the delicate matter of the marriage. Only the boy's father now and then sends a little reminder to Gitsimbanyi in the form of beer, meaning, "Well, what about this date of the marriage? When are we to decide it?" Finally,



he grows impatient and sends the *inzoga yo gutebutza*—in other terms, “Now, listen, let’s stop all this nonsense and get on with it.” This time the messengers return with a definite answer.

During all these days pretty Kankera has scarcely stirred from her father’s kraal. Two or three times only has she emerged, and each time—just by chance, of course, she has encountered Kamanzi. And each time she has at once changed her course, or at least turned her head well away so that she would not see him ; or, to put it better, so that others should not observe that she was devouring him with her soft dark eyes. For even in Rwanda there is plenty of gossip.

As for the boy, his manner demonstrates elaborately that these encounters were the merest chance, for not to embarrass her he has made a point of never meeting her. All his friends must admit that it was sheer coincidence that put him in her path just those two or three times she appeared in public.

The day of the marriage finally comes. From Gitsimbanyi’s kraal, at night, a huge, whitish monster of strange form crawls out. It is only a wide mat under which Kankera has hidden herself with a dozen maidens, her best friends ; she crying desperately, the others trying vainly to console her for the horrible thing that is happening to her—(and what a pity not to themselves as yet !).

On reaching the new huts which Sezikeye has prepared for his son, the human centipede pays no attention to the group composed of the bridegroom and his friends who are waiting outside, but squeezes itself through the narrow entrance of the principal hut and goes directly to the bedchamber. There,

the mat is thrown aside. Kankera, crying more desperately than ever, seats herself on the bed, and the girl friends retire to the living-room, after having broken a branch in front of the bride as a delicate allusion to the destiny awaiting her virginity.

Events, however, are much more slow and leisurely than the girl friends seem to wish. In the next room their vigorous handclapping, so deliberately loud, is all for nothing; and their continuous songs of "Bride, peace be with you" are taken quite literally.

For, on that first night, the young brother of the bride is there to represent the protection still given to her by her family. And tradition imposes upon him the unhappy task of sleeping the entire night between his sister and his new brother-in-law.

During the next two or three nights the brother and the girl friends are no longer in evidence, which is already something. But tradition is again there to bother the young couple, demanding a full-strength resistance from the bride to show that she is not becoming just a property, a slave, of her husband.

When at last she feels that she has given sufficient scope to her principles, it is the turn of the boy to play a rôle. He must not take advantage of the surrender of his wife. On the contrary, he must be extremely prudent and gentle and patient, so that he will not frighten the sweet little thing now abandoned in his long, strong arms. And in contrast to the first two ceremonies, this last one seems far more kind and sensible and considerate than the customs in use among so-called civilised peoples.

There is no reticence regarding the progress of the marriage. Every morning the maidens come to demand publicly of the bride, "Have you won?"

And as long as her answer is "yes," back they come the following morning. And each morning the boys come to demand publicly of the groom, "Have you won?" And when his answer, finally, is "yes," they do not come back any more. Or the maidens, either.

That morning, however, various things take place. The boy's father gives to the bridegroom a bow and arrows as a confirmation of his new status of complete manhood. The bridegroom gives to the bride, as an omen of fertility a calabash of milk from a cow that has borne a bull. And the bride, by some of her slaves, sends at once to her mother the skin which comprised her maiden's garment, as an announcement of the *fait accompli*. And the mother must revive straightway all her charms and offer them to her husband, because within that day a demonstration of the strong affection of the bride's parents must vouch for the happiness of the young ménage.

Finally the chain is ended by the gifts which the old man sends to his daughter—a new cow's skin well tanned and softened with plenty of butter-rubbing; two mats for the conjugal bed; a provision of butter; some bracelets, and a cow, which will remain her personal property. The particular name of that cow, *Inka y' indongoranyo*, represents better than any other expression the significance of all these gifts, as *indongoranyo* comes from a verb meaning "to help initiate a new ménage."

This is an example of what one would call a very correct and fashionable wedding. But there are more impatient and violent young warriors who want to avoid the long waiting of the engagement period, or to have wives of whom their fathers do not approve,

or for whom the maidens' families have other plans. Then the hot-heads recur to another much quicker system in which tradition has consecrated the impetuous acts of their less conventional ancestors.

The simplest way is for the young man to circulate around with a very innocent air, concealing under his toga a crown made of some sacred herbs. If he succeeds in approaching the girl of his heart and putting the crown on her head before anyone interferes, she is his wife by "right of rape."

The other method is to send a friend to visit the family of the maiden. The friend must be chosen very carefully so as not to arouse any suspicion, and must be a clever boy, because while all the eyes of the family are upon him he must contrive to hide a bracelet somewhere in the hut. If everything goes well and no one notices his little operation, as soon as he is out of the house he shouts: "I must let you know that on behalf of my friend So-and-so I have hidden a bracelet for your daughter in your hut!" Then he runs away at top speed, for if the family can catch him they will compel him to take back the bracelet, and then good-bye to the enterprise.

In both cases, if matters are successful, the marriage rites begin that same night. Often, however, a proud family decides that the insult received is too much and starts immediate preparations to attack in full force the lover's house and recover the maiden. These preparations may take several days, but owing to all the limitations imposed upon a Butussi husband, the attack usually proves to be still timely, and the maiden, willing or not, is freed before what is called the irreparable has happened.

If, instead, all goes smoothly and the maiden is not

recovered by her kinsmen, fashion decrees that the marriage must be regularised as soon as possible with a posthumous exchange of visits, beer, cows, etc., both the parents of the boy and of the girl being anxious to settle the affair quickly, as until they do so tradition requires of the two old couples obedience to all the obligations of the *guteru umaishwa* ; that is, an absolute prohibition of tilling the ground or drawing water, plus other more intimate embargoes. The exchange of an *Imka y'ubuntu*, "a cow of generosity," between the parents usually seals the proceedings definitely and in a friendly manner.

This may seem all quite complicate, and in many details tainted with barbaric colour, but the general result is that among the Watussi marriage seems to be a much happier and better balanced institution than in all the rest of Africa. Cases of infidelity are extremely rare, and it practically never happens that a maiden "breaks the branch" before the marriage.

Another tradition is responsible for such a moral state of affairs. For up to a few years ago when the Belgians succeeded in stamping out the custom, both the virgin, or the woman, and the man guilty of an infraction of the moral code were inexorably condemned to death.

The most exquisite little islands I have ever seen in my life have been for centuries the theatre of these cruel deaths. I saw them the first time from Mushao, on the Rwanda shores of the Lake Kivu. Reaching the top of a hill overlooking the lake, a fantastic vision suddenly revealed itself to our eyes. Under, before, and over us was infinite space—infinite nuances of delicate mother-of-pearl, sky and water

melted and blent imperceptibly together. Seemingly suspended in mid-air, dozens and dozens of tiny islands of every form looked in as many shimmering mirrors at the trembling reflections of their dark-grey, dark-green colouring. Not a sign of life all around, not a living soul, not a canoe, not a bird. Nothing but dream.

A vagrant wind brushed gently the short grass at our feet.

“Mariri, M'tera, Kapfunuka,” murmured the imposing Butussi prince who had undertaken to guide us, indicating one by one the nearest islands. “Wawu, Bugarura, Itembalagoyi.” Then, his eyes lost in that luminous immensity he added, more to himself than to us, “There on those islands where no food of any kind can be found, hundreds of lovers have been brought and left. So that they might live until death and in death their guilty love.”

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MWAMI RUDAHIGWA

TAM-TAM-TAM, tam, tam-tam !

Suddenly I am wide awake, and through the flaps of my tent, open for the entrance of the bracing breeze from the east, I see the points of the eucalyptus trees detach themselves in silhouette, black against the red halo which is just beginning to break the darkness of the night.

Tam-tam-tam, tam, tam-tam !

It is the voice of the *Cock* that has aroused me, the smallest tambour of all the royal instruments and the earliest riser. And now he continues, faster and faster, more and more exuberant, in his appeal to the other drums to join him.

One by one, slowly and dreamily they murmur, lazily taking their places in the orchestra led by the *Cock*. And in the vague unreality of the hour it seems to me that I see them waking, those huge bellied tambours, and recognise them as soon as they have shaken off their drowsiness and grown alert.

*Sinkangimiliango* is the first, with the slow, sweet sounds that justify his name, "the one who does not frighten the clans."

Syncopated metallic notes come in. It is *Butare*, "strong as the rock."

Then other voices, other notes ; the deep prolonged

notes of *Kiragutze*, "the biggest of all, as tall as a man"; the martial fiery tones of *Mpatsibihugu*, "the defender of the country"; and others and others from the highest to the lowest tonalities, with rhythms slow, quick or frenetic, preparing the entrance for the great *Gissabarwanda*, "the one who resounds through all the land."

The cataract of sound which pours down upon me from the top of the hill crowned by the palace of Mwami Rudahigwa IV Mutare swells into a majestic symphony which seems to fill all space. My tent shakes slightly under those vibrating waves of sound. I feel something within myself quiver, and I believe that I can distinguish, repeated a hundred times in that perfect rhythm, the message which the music expresses :

"Now, the King is waking,  
Now, all the Watussi must awake."

To return to sleep is impossible. I go out from my tent in the rapid dawn of the equator which has already painted the sky with its most marvellous colours. The round tops of the mountains which in innumerable chains surround Nyanza, the capital of Rwanda, are etched now on the deep saffron of the horizon. The echoes of those mountains repeat the message of the royal tambours, catapulting it from valley to valley, across hundreds of little lakes, merging it finally in the rumblings of the great never-sleeping volcanoes, Mikeno, "the barren"; Sabinyo, "the father with huge teeth"; Karissimbi, "the white shell"; Mahabura, "who brings one back in the right path"; and the Nyambangira, the Galinga,



the Nyiragongo, and the Visake, worthy sentinels of this land of magnificent giants.

“ Now, the King is waking,  
Now, all the Watussi must awake.”

the drums repeat for the last time.

With the King, all creation has awakened. With him, awakes the world of which Rwanda is the centre and the light, “ so much that the two horns of the moon are directed toward Rwanda to indicate it, to protect it.”

And their King, that absolute monarch, possessing over the Watussi and two million Bahutu natives and Batwa pygmies the most complete power of life and death (even if to-day somewhat theoretical) is a young man, twenty-one years of age, whose reign began unexpectedly five years ago.

The date of his accession to the throne is marked by the little ditch, still well defined, which surrounds the small clearing of beaten earth where my tent is pitched. Here, on the fourteenth of November, 1931, appeared unheralded the tent of Governor Voisin, the dynamic and dynamitic man who roused Rwanda from her centuries-old feudal torpor, saved her from the terrific famines which from time to time decimated her thick population, and started her toward her future as one of the most promising of African countries.

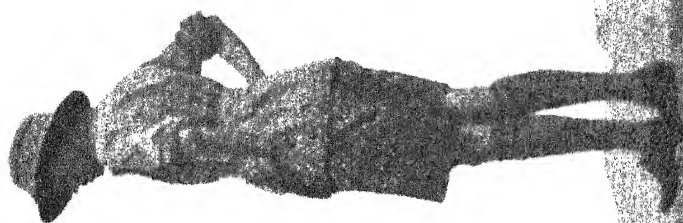
No pomp, nor music, nor reception accompanied the arrival of the “ man of steel.” Silent, uncommunicative as statues, the few black soldiers of his escort remained at their posts at the back of his camp. The atmosphere of the day was heavy,

sultry, full of electricity. The Governor had come to accomplish what could be called a "legal coup d'etat"—to depose the old king, Musinga, long a subtle enemy to the activities of the whites and to the progress of his country, manipulated as he was by a dominating, superstitious mother and a whole corps of priests and witch doctors.

Rwanda-Urundi being a territory under mandate given by the League of Nations, it had taken Belgium months and months of fighting before she had been able to convince the Geneva arm-chair Africanists that a change was indispensable, urgent. Tender hearts of every country, knowing nothing of Rwanda, of Congo, of Africa even, had found their opportunity for a new outburst of discourses. Musinga was for them a good, innocent old king that a tyrant white country wanted to depose for her own hidden purposes. Here, they proclaimed, was an intolerable abuse against a poor oppressed race of negroes which had put all its hopes in the safe hands of the League. The sacred principles of freedom and self-government, of progress and humanity, of civilisation and the peace of the world, once more were pulled out, carefully dusted, and violently agitated before the eyes of unbelievers.

But these lamentable sentimentalists had never heard before the name of Musinga, nor of his mother Kanzogera, who took advantage of her position of "official mother" of King Rutalindwa—a son of her husband and another woman—to doom him to perdition. Nor finally of her brother, Kabale, who, for the sake of his sister's and his own ambitions forfeited the trust of Rutalindwa and brought him to the point of burning himself alive, together with his





wife and three children, in the hut where Kabale's plot had left them stranded.

How right the King had been in committing that family suicide in order not to fall alive into the hands of the traitors, was soon proved by the orgy of unbelievable cruelties with which the mother and the uncle of the usurper celebrated their ill-obtained victory, transforming the country into a wholesale slaughter-house.

Members of the family of the Banyiginya, guilty only of having remained faithful to their King, were impaled ; or cut in pieces while still living, in the middle of a pack of starving hounds which grasped the flesh not yet completely severed from the body of the tortured ; or bound up in metallic wire until it penetrated to the bones ; or amputated upon each day, nails and limbs being removed during atrocious agonies lasting sometimes five or six days.

"Progress, humanity, civilisation," the League's professors were preaching.

But down there in Rwanda, in that obscure corner of the world which nobody knew, there was a man as firm as a rock, a man who knew that Musinga on the throne meant the possibility of the return of the tragic famines of the past, the constant danger of sudden outbursts of war and massacre, of widespread vendettas and mass executions. And behind that man there was a Government fully realising his value, and the seriousness of his fears and the feasibility of his hopes.

Finally, that Government had won, and upon that man had fallen the task of obtaining a pacific success to the *coup d'etat*. A great responsibility,

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both before his own conscience and the eyes of the world, that must have weighed heavily upon Governor Voisin as he paced up and down, up and down, in his tent, studying in advance every least move of that game which had as stake the whole destiny of an entire country.

More and more, during two days, the tension increased, the atmosphere of impending calamity thickened. Then, when failure and disaster seemed unavoidable, the resistance snapped. The diplomacy, the energy, the authority of the white man triumphed.

The Kalinga, the paladium and ensign of the royal power, was surrendered. Not the ancient traditional tambour of Ruganzu, "the conqueror-king," who had adorned it with the heads and testicles of all the princes he had defeated in a lifetime of wars. That one had been consumed in the same fire in which Rutalindwa and his family had died in Ruchuncu thirty years before. It was the new one which, without too much worrying about tradition, Kabale had made and given to Musinga, that was secretly brought to the tent of the Governor. It meant that Musinga had bent his head, that his partisans had accepted to let him go to his exile at Kamembe-Shangugu, and would stage no rebellious outburst in his behalf.

The bugles of the Governor's escort rang out. The orchestra of royal tambours played by the best musicians of the kingdom, flooded Rwanda with the most beautiful melodies of the past. And Rudahigwa, son of Musinga, and in spite of his seven feet of slender height, still a serious, sweet-natured child of sixteen, whose studies and games had been

interrupted only by the turmoil of the last few days, found himself on a huge dais draped in flags, seated at the right of the Governor he loved and respected, and receiving the oath of allegiance of the Watussi princes.

Five years of peace, prosperity and progress have passed since that day, and *Ndamutsa*, "I salute the King," the enormous tambour which until the reign of Musinga was heard only to announce the arrival of the monarch to witness a mass execution, appeared to us as a symbol of the changed times when, filling the air with its majestic voice, it proclaimed about nine o'clock that morning of February 25th that Rudahigwa IV had appeared before his subjects, and that therefore we could go to pay him a visit.

Standing alone at the top of the steps of the white palace which the Belgian Government built and presented to him, Rudahigwa awaited us. The deferential bow with which he received us was unaccompanied by words, for, as I have said before, it is not Watussi etiquette to salute first the person one wishes to honour.

"*Amasho, Mwami*," I told him.

A smile of pleasure, touching in its childish sincerity, illuminated the finely-chiselled face of the King, which before had been so grave and intent.

"*Amashongore, monsieur*," he replied, completing the traditional salutation. His very white teeth shone, while his big, velvety eyes turned instinctively to meet those, so affectionate under their assumed severity and a great pair of glasses, of Mr. Lenaerts, the Territorial Administrator, who had accompanied us.

"*Voulez-vous bien entrer, Madame?*" continued the young King, with another bow, to my wife. His French was perfect, without the trace of an accent. And not an hesitation, not an attempt to continue the interview in Banyarwanda. Thirty-ninth king of his dynasty, he had too much tact and perspicacity not to know that it would have been too hard on us.

The palace itself seems a casino transplanted from the shores of the Mediterranean. After having crossed its spacious, empty veranda, we entered a huge room—reception room, as the few arm-chairs rigidly placed around the central table told us, and private study also, as was indicated by a big writing-desk covered with papers in one corner, where several Roneo files and a typewriter were in evidence.

Draped in a long white peplum decorated with crimson suns, her hair close-cropped to denote the married state, a woman emerged from a dark corner of the room and came toward us, her head bent, full of embarrassment.

"Nyiramasuka, my wife," Rudahigwa announced, and those three words, spoken as he pronounced them, were enough to confirm the report that the King tenderly loves his Queen, the flower of Watussi women, beautiful, gentle, intelligent companion of the handsomest monarch of all Africa.

She bowed silently to my wife. But the excited, comprehensive glance which accompanied the greeting expressed all her curiosity for the woman who had come from far, far away—"Wa-American"—in the meantime giving me a new proof of how universal is feminine freemasonry.

The bow to me was apparently blind, for the eyes



of the Queen were scrupulously fixed on the floor. But I felt myself being taken in, weighed and examined by the tail of her eye as she welcomed Mr. Lenaerts—this last a respectful but friendly and natural salutation, for here was an old friend who usually grumbled but who had been the patient preceptor of Rudahigwa and was still the tutelar angel of the little family.

“And this,” Rudahigwa remarked, to fill the ensuing pause, “is the totem of my family.”

He indicated an immense crested crane, beautifully painted, probably by a missionary, above the top of the high fire-place at one end of the room.

Then Nyiramasuka seated herself, perfectly timing her action with ours and lifting a corner of her toga to cover all the lower part of her face. As delicately as possible I asked the reason for this gesture, as soon as the conversation had become a bit animated and Rudahigwa had thrown off some of his timidity.

“Watussi women never appear in public,” he told me, with all his charming and so juvenile seriousness, “and if in some exceptional circumstances they are allowed to do so, they never talk.”

“Pity the custom doesn’t obtain with us,” I teased my wife.

Rudahigwa evidently didn’t know if to approve would be impolite toward the foreign lady. Before smiling, he gave her a glance, a quick, quick glance, for a white woman frightens him to the point of misery. But the Queen found in my feeble little joke more amusement than I could have hoped for, and allowed a gurgle from beneath the toga-mask and the mischievous shining of her deep brown eyes to express it freely.

“ Would you like me to show you the house ? ”

Mr. Lenaerts approved, satisfied with his pupil. And the King preceded us. Over a white shirt of the finest silk, only the soft collar being visible, he wore the traditional Watussi costume to which he has remained exclusively attached—an immaculate white toga ornamented sometimes with scarlet suns, in the present case with stripes of bright colours, which accentuated his seven and a half feet of height and his agile slenderness, giving him meanwhile all the dignity of a Roman senator.

The remainder of the palace—dining-room and audience-room, bedrooms and bath-rooms, kitchen and larder—seemed to me another symbol of the changing times, and of the absolutely unique attitude the Watussi, proud of their ancient origin and deeply attached as they are to their ancestral customs, have adopted toward our civilisation. While their exceptional intelligence has allowed them to comprehend and use everything they have found beautiful or good or practical for themselves or their country in the civilisation which Belgium brought to them immediately after the World War, their instinctive good taste and artistic sense have prevented them from the apish and ridiculous imitation of European habits and attitudes and dress which has destroyed the character and primitive dignity of so many other natives.

And the assimilation of the new has happened with such simplicity and the conservation of the ancient is maintained with such devotion and respect that, for example, in the bedroom of the young couple the modernistic European beds—Rudahigwa made a point of having us admire the spring mattresses—

blend perfectly with the mobile multi-coloured mats stretched on concave screens surrounding them, which, as in the old Watussi huts, provide complete privacy and plenty of light and air.

The tiled baths with their modern plumbing arrangements do not clash at all with the huge brown calabashes, with the capacious pots in white wood, both polished by the usage of centuries, in which in the larder are conserved clean and fresh the chief foods of the Watussi—beer and honey, milk and butter.

Even more striking is the contrast and the blending of two such separated epochs that one finds in the court behind the house, where near a perfect plant for piped-in water and a model kennel for the numerous dogs the King keeps for his various types of hunting, place is given to a sacred monkey and a hut, both representing cults devoted to the oldest monarchs of the dynasty. The monkey, a cynocephalus, is religiously attended by a special clan, "The Men of the Cavern," in memory of its progenitors who, three hundred years ago, saved King Ruganza II, "The Victorious," showing him a passage through underground galleries by which he escaped from the cavern where he was perishing from the fumes of torches lit by his enemies to destroy him.

As for the fire burning in an immense earthenware plate in the ancient hut in a corner of the court of that place that looks like a casino, it has burned on that very spot for centuries and centuries. And many Abiru, the men of the clan in whose custody it is, have been put to death in the past for failing

to tend zealously enough the fire which King Gihanga, "the creator," first received from the gods, and which he passed at his death to his successor and son, Kanyarwanda, one of the founders of the dynasty.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE KING'S COURT

SUPERSTITIONS, traditions, customs, are seldom composed merely of the horror and cruelty or the glamour and romance that the patina of time has spread over them. Looking beneath the surface, one usually finds at the base an origin dictated either by sound common sense, or by the ethical, political, moral or physiological necessities of the people among whom they obtained.

So it is among the Watussi, beginning with the "royal name," which the council of the highest sorcerers imposes upon every new king. Far from being only a poetical custom, it is the one way that a country governed for centuries by the most absolute monarchy has found to influence its own destiny through the vision of its wise old men. For no monarch would dare to do anything not in the line of his new name, which practically dictates all his policy and his mode of life.

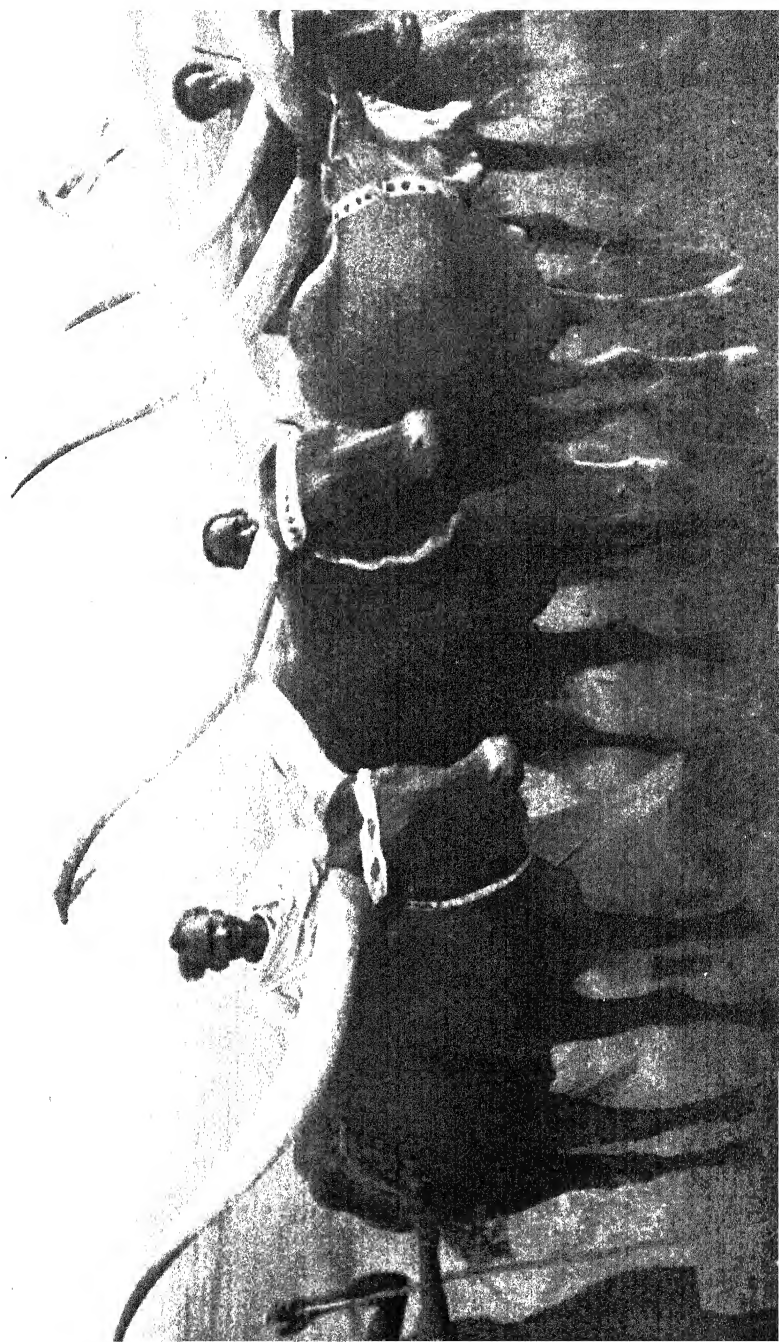
Thus, when Yuhi II, in the midst of deep internal discords, came to the throne, he was called Mazimpaka, "the settler of disagreements." Then, when he had accomplished his task and his people, strong in their new unity, wanted to be respected and needed to expand, Kigeri II Ndabarassa, "the one who kills them with his bow"; and Mibambge III Abatabazi, "the liberator"; and Mutura II Lwogera, "the

one who takes with him the war tambours," faithful to their royal names, followed the warpath all their lives until all the most insolent neighbours had been punished and new territories conquered. The belligerent spirit of the country was awake and swelling with pride, craving new and greater victories. Kigeri IV was called Lwabugiri. Under the fate of his name, "the conquering adventurer," all the years of his reign he wandered and fought and won, was brought even to the greatest adventure of all, when the first white men appeared in his country, and he had to deal with them and with the new situation they had brought with them.

In the following years conditions rapidly changed. The nation suddenly felt the weight of a hundred years of continuous wars. After the short, insignificant reign of Rutalindwa, Yuhi IV having usurped the throne, found himself called Musinga, "the peaceful, the sedentary," and so chained to his new name that he did not dare even to cross the rivers surrounding the country of his residence. His hard-headed attachment to the most cruel customs and the most conservative ideas of the past having brought a dangerous restlessness and a deep sense of misery to the people, and deposition to himself, the wise sorcerers and priests of the Watussi understood that the country could not continue to close its eyes to the new era, to resist and fight it; they realised that an evolution was imperative to adapt the people to new times. And the young Rudahigwa IV was named Mutare, "the evolutionist."

Rudahigwa has certainly lived up to his royal name, as the best of his predecessors did in the past. And this eager, soul-deep evolution toward the

[*facing*: THE CATTLE OF RWANDA IS IN KEEPING  
WITH THE REST OF THE COUNTRY







requirements of a new epoch, of a new civilisation, caused largely by his faithfulness to a name given to him in accordance with the ancient traditions of his people, is the keynote of everything connected with him, of his private and political life as well as of his palace and his court.

The magnificence and elaborate organisation of this court, the infinite complicated privileges, traditional rights and hereditary professions on which it is based, are almost unbelievable to anyone who makes the mistake of confusing the Watussi with the ordinary negro or of ignoring their ancient, noble origin.

I have already mentioned the Abiru, "fire custodians"; "The Men of the Caverns"; "The Makers of Intelligence," and "The Genealogists." No less important are "The Guardians of the Tradition," "The Literary Men," whose task is to conserve the purity of the language, and all the clans of other "Custodians"—of the treasure, of the royal tambours, of the Kalinga, and even of the laws and regulations made by the Europeans for Rwanda.

These dignitaries, as all others holding Court offices, belong exclusively to well-defined families and clans, each one jealous of its own franchises, prerogatives and immunities. This hierarchy starts from the noblest families, the Bakongoro, the Balejuru, the Bega, the Abagessera, supposed to derive from heaven, and the only families into which a king can marry, and runs down all along the gamut of nobility, including a few families of Bahutu, and even of Batwa, which for extraordinary services rendered to monarchs in the past have obtained the great favour of being accepted in the Watussi aristocracy.

To these latter clans belong all the hosts of musicians playing upon horns, ocarinas, guitars and tambours ; the holders of the secrets for making powerful aphrodisiacs, fecundity, and long-life elixirs ; the amulet-makers ; the butchers ; the armourers ; the tailors ; some of the cattle doctors. And the King's Messengers, who are so rich in cattle, for they can demand a cow from every prince to whom they bring a royal letter—probably the heaviest postage charge in the world.

Almost as numerous as in the past are still the cooks, butlers, house servants, tobacco-growers, brewers, personal night-watchmen and all the other officials there to supply every need of the royal family. But until a few years ago their position was extremely unstable and perilous, as the unending Court intrigues kept the monarch under constant fear of having his secret plans revealed, of being killed by surprise or poisoned by his own familiars. Each one of such retainers was required before entering the service to drink a beverage composed of various magic herbs supposed to be inoffensive to the man who faithfully performed his duties, but to act as a deadly poison if he should forfeit the confidence of his master. The poor devils believed blindly in the magic, but evidently the kings were much too sceptical, for they were continually suspecting of treason this servant or that. To be suspected meant to be put immediately to death, and these executions were so frequent as to give the name of Kyriana, "the devouring houses," to the quarters of the personal servants, and to make quite important the position of the executioners, all Batwa pygmies, perennially busy at their grim task.

The chilly mountain climate had created the profession, unique in the world, I believe, of "bed-heaters," held by pretty virgins, who every cold night would lie in groups on the royal bed, keeping it comfortably warm until the monarch wanted to retire.

In spite of the cold and of the altitude, there must have been a great many rats, for the comical but most important cast of "Visitors" was formed, and is still very well considered to-day. The name is just a little trick to deceive the importunate rodents, which, had they heard that the rat-catchers were coming, would have all escaped their ordained slaughter. This is the same line of thought which causes the Watussi never to mention by name an enemy or an animal that they fear, but to use easily understandable paraphrases not involving the danger of calling the presence or the malediction of the foe, such as "the voracious one" for the lion; or, for the leopard, "the one faster than the wind."

Almost impossible to enumerate in detail are all the different classes of sorcerers, enchanters, medicine-men, witch-doctors and priests attached to the court, as the influence of one or the other of these classes covers practically every single field of human and superhuman activities.

Imana, the supreme being and the creator of all things, does not require much sacerdocy, because he does not do any harm and therefore no one takes much care of him.

But the spirits of the dead, those are much to be feared. They put curses on people; and certain sorcerers are there to call them upon the enemy and others to protect the victims. The spirits may ruin

the crops, send bad sicknesses to the cows and kill them, provoke a drought, make your wife sterile, give you a lot of sons when you want daughters, and vice versa, impoverish you, make you ill, put you in disfavour with the King, call upon you every curse. There is no field in which these spirits are not supposed to persecute human beings. And of course every field is covered by a particular clan of witch doctors, the best of whom must always be at the King's disposal.

Men have their *tabu*, women have their *tabu*, children have their *tabu*, and every clan, every village, every season and month and day, almost, have their *tabu*. Some are of Egyptian and Ethiopian origin, some were taken from the aboriginal Bahutu and Batwa, some come from who knows where, but all are equally strict. *Tabu* and *tabu*, *imiziro*, by the hundreds, and it is small wonder that often they are broken. For instance, a man can easily overlook the fact that to beat his wife he has taken a *tabu* kitchen implement ; that while shelling his beans a stranger has passed ; that he has left his spear in the house of a friend, or that meeting a *safari* of ants he may have neglected to pass his hands over his feet, as if to shake them off.

A woman might be careless and cut grass with a scythe, or use some food or garment which had belonged to some member of the family who had recently died ; or she might eat a little piece of meat other than beef ; or become too expansive toward her husband before the three-month mourning period following the death of a king has elapsed—for during that time even the bull, the ram and the cock must be put in isolation.

Or it may happen that a maiden passes under a spear ; or that she sits on a basket which has contained food ; or perhaps that she rests with her sweetheart upon a sheepskin. Worst of all, in gathering wood she might collect a bit of *wange*-wood, so spoiling any chance of ever marrying.

In any case, to avoid dire punishments and disasters, one must see immediately the "specialist," the sorcerer who alone has the power of purifying one from this or that infraction.

Other sorcerers interpret dreams ; others are there ready to sacrifice animals and, according with their class, to follow one of the ten different ways of reading the future of the King. Or to go, at his command, to stop an advancing army ; magically with a series of enchantments, materially with a barrage of phenomena that he always keeps under hand—as a theatrical agent supplying a circus with freaks—because these monsters, albino, virgins with undeveloped breasts, old sterile women, hunchbacks, wretches deformed with goitres and whatever else abnormal and hideous he has managed to collect, are thought to put the enemy in immediate rout. Which is not such a stupid idea after all, as such a sight would be enough to blow the conquest-spirit out of any soldier.

Especially prosperous are the rain-makers, who have reached such a point of perfection in their work that they can delimitate exactly the region to be covered by the rain. Sitting on a hill, or standing with arms extended, or stretching themselves flat on the ground, they indicate that the rainfall resulting from their sorcery will be confined to one hill only, or take in all the district, or all Rwanda. They

usually make huge profits, as a drought is always feared for the cattle and the crops. But they must be expert, too, for until some time ago the failure of their operations meant the forfeiting of their lives.

Necromancers, poisoners and "anti-poisoners," witches and "anti-witches," discoverers of thieves, magicians who protect the fields, or who bring fertility to a sterile woman, continue the unending list. These latter, commonly strong young men, are somewhat gossiped about, as their ministrations go on for a long time in the interior of the hut, deserted except for the patient, while the husband is required to keep slowly pacing around outside, constantly ringing a noisy little bell.

Rwanda is so high above the surrounding country and it contains so many mountains, that very often terrific hurricanes explode in the sky and lightning strikes amid blinding flashes. The thunderbolt has therefore become an important element of the daily life, and the Watussi, who have for so long believed themselves to be the Kings of Earth, have made it the King of Heaven.

Sometimes, extending the long legs of its zigzagging flashes, the lightning descends to earth, an awe-inspiring sight indeed, one that naturally is beheld with fear and that everybody wants the *abagangahuzi*, the witch-doctor of purification, to keep well off. But when it occurs, it is to be considered as a visit between sovereigns, and to be welcomed with joy and festivities and respect, so much so that at its approach it is *tabu* to continue smoking or remain seated, and if it strikes some member of the family, it is even more strictly *imiziro*, forbidden, to complain or weep.







If it is a man who has been killed, he has gone to serve at a higher court than he could ever have hoped to find on earth. If it is a woman, the King of Heaven has taken her in marriage. In both cases the family must only rejoice as at the greatest of honours. And the stricken woman, too, if by any chance she should survive, for she whom the ethereal monarch has made a princess, his earthly colleague, the *Mwami* of the Watussi, must make his own wife.

But sometimes, without harming any human being, the thunderbolt strikes a hut and sets it on fire. Then people must *Kumura Umuriro*, extinguish the fire. A few buckets of water thrown on the burning grass are not sufficient, however, because the fire that the potentate of all heaven has sent is not only the material one that blazes there before human eyes and that the old people are trying to quench. There has been manifested another fire, even older and more powerful than the all-devouring flames, the fire of love, that the first young man who encounters a young woman near the place of the accident must quench on the spot with her, be she a virgin or a married woman. It is the living offering that the mighty lightning requires. A conception, on the whole, which may startle us, but which certainly does not lack of spontaneous poetry and barbaric grandeur.

What spoils it a bit is to hear from someone well-informed that, let's say, Nyiramakomari, that slender girl there, and Mukamusoni, the third married woman from the right—yes, that pretty, plump one with such an innocent air—must keep quite a sharp look-out as soon as a bad hurricane approaches. For since a good two years now, whenever a hut is

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[*facing*: TWO WATUSSI VIRGINS IN A DANCE  
OF EVER-INCREASING FRENZY

burnt, it is always in the vicinity of one or the other of them, or vice versa.

Which, according to the old, devout people, is reviling an ancient, sacred tradition ; and in the words of the young feminine population, is illegitimate competition.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### A COUNTRY THAT ASKS TO BE "DISCOVERED"

Our stay at Nyanza came to an end. And the tambour symphony which, as every evening, was heralded by the "Cock" in the flaming rays of our last afternoon, surprised Rudahigwa in the tent with mosquito-netting walls, constituting, in the centre of our camp, our dining and reception room.

We had just seated ourselves for a cup of tea after having examined in every detail and passionately discussed together the Lister plant which supplies the electricity to our camp, our portable ice-machine, our automatic and repeating Remingtons—one of which I had just presented to the King—and the merits of our motor-cars in comparison with the various automobiles Rudahigwa owns, drives and sometimes repairs himself.

"Well," I said, pausing a moment as always, as the beauty of the drums swept over me, sombre this time in their magnificence, "what does *this* concert mean?"

Rudahigwa did not reply at once. A certain expression of anguish fought with the usual serenity of his features. I noticed then that Dugdale, who dislikes olives, was hastily picking up one, eating it and quite conspicuously throwing the stone through the opened curtains of the tent. Rudahigwa

reassumed all his aplomb, took from his mouth the stone of the unknown fruit that for the past five minutes had reduced him to silence and concern, delicately tossed it away and finally answered in his soft voice :

"It means that the King has gone to bed, and that all the Watussi must go to bed. It is the tradition," he added very seriously, seeing our somewhat puzzled expressions, "which for us is sacred."

These things are what I particularly love and admire in Rudahigwa, as the most perfect and complete representative of his race, and what gave me from our first meeting a strong desire to know him better, to become his friend and receive his confidence. His intelligent curiosity for everything that is good or beautiful or well made ; his born need to be always correct and courteous in what he says and does ; his naive seriousness ; his deep sense of responsibility in every action, big or small, as it may be. And all this surrounded and underlined by his attachment to the ancient customs of his people, which must be preserved and respected as an act of affectionate homage toward the far ancestors, even though to-day's life has rendered them obsolete.

The following morning, Rudahigwa, having for once taken literally the reveille sounded by the concert of royal drums, was up at dawn to see us off, to tell us *au revoir* until Usumbura, where we were to meet a few days later, and to give us some presents from his "treasure." Enriched by a slim little drum, by a horn covered with the skin of an *inyambo*, and the beautiful head-dress of a Butussi woman, once more my wife and I headed our motor column toward

the south, climbing up and down one mountain after another. Astrida, Gozi, Kitega—groups of white houses and red brick buildings peering through curtains of eucalypti and beds of flowers, to look down at the rich valleys below—followed one another during the next two days, interspersed with the hundreds of Bahutu kraals, brilliant with their glistening, decorative banana trees, which clung precariously to the steep sides of the mountains. Until we reached a height of 8,200 feet, and from the top of the escarpment a gust of wind rent the sea of clouds through which we were driving and displayed far below us the ultimate triumph. What we saw at that first glimpse through the clouds seemed but a riotous orgy of colours, a blending of fabulous, fantastic forms and images that left us breathless. Slowly we could distinguish the northern end of Lake Tanganyika, 5,000 feet below us, closed among mountains which, from our height, seemed but small hills, under a sky on which the sunbeams had expended all their most gorgeous array of colours, pricking here and there the cyclopic white clouds hugging the mountains to launch themselves upon the smooth mirror of the water and change it into a sheet of sparkle and fire, reflecting strange lights upon the tiny cubes of the houses of Uvira, on the Congo side, and on the palm gardens of Usumbura, the last town in Rwanda-Urundi, and the seat of the Governor.

The next day, while in the office of his secretary, I was waiting to be received by the Governor, a paper was handed to me. It was a copy of a letter from the Governor-General, announcing that the Belgian Colonial Ministry had, a month previously,

restored to me my Okapi permit. It gave me so much joy that I had the temptation of embracing the poor, innocent secretary and letting out an "hurrah" which would have seemed quite out of place in that silent building, where everyone was deep in thought and work among piles and piles of papers. But a door opened, and a blond, vigorous man in immaculate white drills, a man in the prime of life, emanating an extraordinary impression of energy and efficiency, spoke questioningly my name. I did not need to look at his heavily-braided, golden epaulettes and rows of many-coloured ribbons to know that I was meeting Governor Jungers.

From M. Voisin, M. Jungers has received the great responsibility of carrying on the cultural, agricultural and commercial development of Rwanda-Urundi. And from the first words of our interview I understood that he, as well as his predecessor, realised the importance of the direct and indirect advantages that an always increasing touristic movement could bring to his territories.

"We like to have good visitors," he told me in his incisive voice, after the first little hesitations speaking fluently in English. "We like for everybody in the world to come who cares to 'discover' this wonderful country, to see how it is developing, improving, leaping ahead almost under one's eyes. You may say that every tourist will be welcomed in Rwanda-Urundi with the greatest sense of hospitality and cordiality."

I assured him that no one could have known this better than ourselves, after the experience of the previous months, and all the kindness and assistance

we had received everywhere, from everybody, since crossing the borders.

"Every place where there are hotels," he continued, "here in Usumbura, at Kisenyi on the Lake Kivu, at Kitega, Kigali and Astrida, we are doing our best to improve them. Where they cannot be afforded yet, we build up rest-houses, in which every traveller can spend the night quite comfortably and have his boys cook his food. I have personally given orders to all the officials at the borders to facilitate and assist strangers coming to visit Rwanda-Urundi. They will feel at home here. They will enjoy a perfect climate, incur no danger of any kind so far as they keep a helmet on their heads during the hot hours of the day. If they come with a motor-car, all they need is a camp bed each, with bedding and mosquito-net for the very few places where mosquitoes are to be found. There is no need to bring huge quantities of baggage, as necessities can be bought in our little towns at very moderate prices. It is not even indispensable for the tourist to come with his own motor-cars, as good automobiles can be found here at three or four Belgian francs per kilometre, petrol, oil, driver, everything included."

It certainly is a great pity that so few people go to that country of wonders, hidden, as it is, in the very central and most romantic part of Africa, but so easily reachable from every direction and by such fascinating itineraries.

From the north, it is Alexandria or Port Said ; Cairo, the Nile and the monuments of ancient Egypt ; the Uele and the Ituri, with their pygmies, their rare, unique animals, and their awe-inspiring herds of elephants ; the Kabasha escarpment and

the plains and mountains of the Parc National Albert, teeming with game ; the Lake Kivu, with its hundred islands ; the "African Naples," and a very good hotel at Goma, under the highest volcanoes.

From the south it is the South African Eden, perhaps the most complete country in the world, with its great modern cities and primitive, infinite wildernesses ; forest, bush, plantations and deserts ; ocean, lakes, rivers, marches ; plains, hills, mountains and perennial snows. Then Southern and Northern Rhodesia ; Elisabethville, the "Pearl of Congo" ; the Katanga, built on copper ; the Lualaba River, on the shores of which game appears to be sometimes as thick as only vegetation can be.

From the west, the train from Matadi to Leopoldville ; then the boat on the majestic Congo River to Stanleyville ; and the road through the great forest to Irumu and Beni, then down to Rutchuru and Ruhengeri, to the heart of Rwanda.

From the east, Dar-es-Salaam, the vast game reservoir of Tanganyika's plains, and the immensity of Lake Tanganyika ; or, from Mombasa, through Kenya and Uganda to Kakitumba. And after crossing the greater part of Rwanda-Urundi, the return along the Ruzizi, filled with crocodiles and hippos, across a country full of elephants and buffaloes, up to Costermansville, where there is the Hotel de la Ruzizi, perhaps the best hotel of the whole country, to Goma and Rutchuru, and back through Uganda.

From whatever direction they come, however, the explorer, the scientist, the painter, the photographer, as well as the hunter, the alpinist, the motorist, and even the least ambitious of tourists who travels just for his own enjoyment, upon arriving in Rwanda



can find, each in his own way, an actual paradise, a country still to be "discovered," to use the picturesque word of the Governor.

In various other interviews with M. Jungers, he informed me of the present situation of the coffee-growing activities in his Territory, a subject particularly interesting to me—although I am a complete layman in agricultural questions—as it represents the crowning accomplishment of a policy I had had the opportunity of seeing inaugurated and put in action during my previous trip through the Mandate Territory.

It was then the beginning of 1930 ; and Governor Charles Voisin, having realised with extraordinary clarity all the enemies that undermined and endangered the life and development of Rwanda-Urundi, had just declared an inexorable war on all of them simultaneously.

The retrogressive, obstructionistic mentality of the court, represented in Rwanda by Musinga and his clique, he swept away with the deposition of the usurper-king.

The hydra of sleeping-sickness, which in Urundi was taking each year a toll of thousands of lives along the shores of Lake Tanganyika and the Ruzizi River, he crushed once for all by transplanting entire populations to the healthy, fertile mountains of the escarpment.

To the plague of portage—and in the meantime to the segregation of vast provinces—he brought a radical remedy with the construction of the great North-South road from Kakitumba to Usumbura, and a whole network of highways connecting it with every post of some importance.

The worst and most catastrophic danger remained—the tragic famines which, in the past, periodically brought Rwanda-Urundi into the head-lines of the world press with sensational figures of hundreds of thousands dead.

Some of the causes of the famines were obscure, others quite obvious, but the scale on which they existed was such as to make them appear irreparable by human means. There was to be considered the immense destruction of forested areas that the Watussi, to create always new pastures for their ever-increasing cattle, had recklessly made during the past; and the instability such destruction had brought in the rain-regimen, provoking long droughts and excessive rains, which would fall unheralded on the country, drying or flooding all the cultivations, in either case, plunging millions into the most dire and prolonged lack of food.

Could men stand against the forces of nature, modify them and cancel the deleterious work of centuries? It seemed unfeasible, impossible. Yet Governor Voisin dared to face them, to include them in the rank of the enemies he was determined to destroy. Being in the country at that moment, I had the privilege of witnessing the battle, of seeing the Governor and his faithful assistants, headed by M. Mortehan, his second-in-command, accomplish the miracle.

As by magic, five or six thousand acres of denuded ground were covered again with the protection of trees, and provision made for equal areas to be reforested each succeeding year.

Manioca, which is not susceptible to the caprices of seasons and weather, was introduced into the

country, and with unbelievable speed and regularity spread, to make a garden for every village the first year, for every family the second, for every male individual the third. Simple as the Columbus egg in theory ; a fantastic amount of pain and labour and organisation in practice ; a perennial life insurance in actual reality. And, undoubtedly, an indestructible monument to the merits of Belgian colonisation.

Not satisfied with this, M. Voisin thought out, planned and initiated the next step also, a stupendous project for developing and securing to the country a permanent source of abundant wealth. Then, before retiring to the peace of his Tournai, he had the good fortune of seeing M. Jungers chosen for his successor, a man of courage, energy and tenacity equal to the continuation of the work.

The new Governor, without hesitation, completed the transformation of the entire Rwanda-Urundi into a gigantic co-operative of Arabica coffee producers, in which every Butussi participates in the ratio of his rank and which in three years will have the enormous annual output of ten thousand tons of coffee. During less than three years of his governorship his organisation of experimental stations, nurseries, research laboratories, drying plants, has already reached and covered every province. But all this would not have been enough in a country which, it must be remembered, the Belgians administer but do not govern. The persuasive or coercive action to induce the Watussi to participate in the undertaking—a vital factor, naturally, in its success—had to be left to their King. And in this King, too, Rwanda found the man it needed.

“ We are expecting great things from Rudahigwa,” the Governor told me one day. “ The question of the coffee, as any other idea of progress, still encounters resistance from the oldest and most conservative elements of the country. But there is Rudahigwa. Although so young, his mind is open to the broadest visions.”

And indeed Rudahigwa, and the propaganda service created by the Governor, are obtaining such widespread results, and all the inhabitants of Rwanda are becoming so enthusiastic about the profits they will get from the coffee culture, that the Government finds itself embarrassed in endeavouring to supply the immense quantities of young plants that not only the Watussi, but the great mass of the Bahutu as well, are increasingly requesting every day.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### “THE KING IS THY FRIEND”

WITHIN the borders of Rwanda the coffee policy instituted by its last two governors calls only for indiscriminate admiration. But on a quick trip which we made from Usumbura to Bukavu, in order to prepare for our arrival there and the work we wanted to do in the vicinity, we soon learned that in the Kivu, on the other side of the Mandate Territory frontier, this same policy is looked at with great apprehension by the European coffee-planters.

These planters are Belgians, Italians, Frenchmen and Hollanders who came there in the years following the end of the World War to buy or rent concessions, and representatives of large companies owning several plantations. They have practically given birth to the little town of Costermansville—which is so named on the map, but which is still locally called by its native name, “Bukavu”—and by their money and industry and labour have kept the Kivu District alive ever since.

Now they are in a state of deep alarm. For they have to live, with their families, and of course on the basis of white standards. They have to pay direct and indirect taxes ; and to produce coffee they have to pay for the ground, for the labour, the nurseries and the young plants, the fertilizers, the analysis, the machinery. And, owing to the present low price

of coffee, they are tied there for year after year, scarcely putting together the two ends of their budgets and fearful of being too optimistic if they hope that at the end of a decade of privations and hard work they may see the first cent of net profit.

Now, they say, neighbouring Rwanda will throw on the market a huge quantity of coffee, with the immediate effect of lowering still further the market prices. And under what conditions will this production have been done? The Butussi has to spend very little for taxes, and nothing for his living, nothing for the ground, nothing for labour or natural fertilisers, as the Bahutu is required to give him as much free labour as he needs. Furthermore, the Government puts at his disposal, free of charge, laboratories and expert assistance, experimental stations, nurseries, and young plants for the asking.

Is it fair to us, the European planters ask anxiously, that on the day this new huge production comes on the market and puts down the prices even lower than they are now, we shall be completely ruined, while the natives will still make, under any circumstances, a big profit?

Obviously, it is not. Governor Jungers, when I asked him this same question, replied with a brusqueness entirely foreign to his nature, that this matter did not bear any more discussion.

His point of view can be readily seen. He is there to protect the enormous population confided to him, to make it prosperous and to give it all the peace, happiness and progress which come only from steady prosperity. He sees to it that the native plantations are as good as the best of the Kivu farmers. He knows that in the former there is no danger of

contamination, for, if a serious disease breaks out, his technical service will have full authority to destroy immediately any number of infected plants and to take any other emergency measure that the white farmers, and particularly the big companies, would oppose with all their strength, by nature and necessity being more concerned with their personal and immediate interests than with the general future welfare of the whole country.

But one can see also the standpoint of the *colons*<sup>1</sup>, whose vital interest lays in the success of their plantations, from which depends the living for their families, the safety of their capital, and the recompense for so many years of hard work and sacrifices of every kind.

However, as for every other problem, there is a solution which could protect the interests of the pioneers, while allowing even greater developments of the vision that has been dictated to men like Voisin and Jungers by their wide-reaching, far-seeing love for the country and the natives. That is, that the Government, or some institution created by it, buy at fair prices all the white plantations and divide them among the natives, repaying itself in a certain number of years with the receipts of a part of the production made by the natives, which that institution or governmental department would, of course, have to handle.

In this way, it seems to me, the whites, who apparently would all be very glad to return to their own countries with something in hand, would receive a really just treatment; the natives would benefit enormously, both through an increased

<sup>1</sup> The white farmers.

freedom and the progress entailed by larger responsibilities, and through a financial return incomparably greater than their present low labour wages ; material advantage would accrue to the local trade, and indirectly to the Government, which would be able to obtain better revenue from export taxes and be freed from all the labour-enrolling complications.

A solution on these lines seems to have been indicated by the young, extremely alert, new Governor-General of Congo, M. Pierre Ryckmans, when he recently declared, "I am a great believer in a progressive evolution of the natives. The natives must produce and the Europeans must purchase this production at such a price that both are able to earn their living."

Meanwhile, Monsieur Jungers, a man with a big responsibility on his shoulders, a man who has in his hands the destiny of a country four times larger than Belgium, with a population which is the thickest in all Africa, except for Egypt, must think, before everything, of the well-being of his three and a half million subjects. He cannot afford to await the evolution of a regime more far reaching in its beneficence. He must act now, under the conditions with which he is actually faced.

"A Rwanda covered by a network of well-kept highways," Governor Jungers said to me on my return to Usumbura, "every hamlet having its little mine of agricultural wealth, every village its well-directed school, every province being in competition with the others in the beauty and health of its magnificent cattle, with everywhere peace, serenity, prosperity, that is my dream, my purpose. And Rudahigwa sees it, shares it with me. His courage,

[*facing*: A BATWA PYGMY RE-ENACTS A HUNT  
WITH DRAMATIC VIVIDNESS







his persistency, his seriousness, impose themselves upon even the oldest and the most stubborn. We know that we can expect great things from Rudahigwa.”

The young king was, with ourselves, a guest of the Governor. During the preceding months I had come to know him better. I had seen him playing football with the young princes of Nyanza, galloping across the field with his toga lifted with two hands above his knees. I had admired the strong game he put up at the net, those extraordinarily long legs and arms, and that infallible eye of his making him a formidable adversary for the few white devotees of tennis at Nyanza.

For hours and hours, in my camp or at his palace, we had discussed everything and everybody ; Rudahigwa addressing to me the most sensible and penetrating questions on the subject of Bushman paintings and ancient African civilisation, on our work and my trip ; I bombarding him with inquiries regarding the habits and beliefs and traditions and ceremonies of the Watussi.

Now, draped in his white toga, ornamented with big red suns, he was there with us at the Governor's long table, shining with crystal and silver ; and, as always, he was perfectly correct, natural and unassuming. I smiled involuntarily as I remembered the question that M. Jungers had addressed to me very delicately the day before : “ You do not mind if Rudahigwa has lunch with us ? ”

The question gave me rather a shock, for I realised for the first time that, unthinkingly and naturally, I had invited him to my own table—a contingency, much as I admire and love the African native, which

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I had never even conceived as a possibility. But Rudahigwa himself, with his finely-cut features, his bronze skin, his personal cleanliness and quick intelligence and, above all, with that air of grand seigneur which only the true aristocrat can achieve, had quietly and unobtrusively excluded himself from the classification of "African native."

"I am still too young," I heard him saying to one of my companions, "but in a few years, when my wife will know French perfectly and I shall have more culture, more possibility of absorbing all that a trip like that can teach me, then, yes, I hope to go for some months in Europe, in Belgium."

Among the guests at that lunch were officials whom Rudahigwa had known well for many years, and toward them he showed a spontaneous warmth of feeling I had never seen in him before. Towards us, his reticence had always been so strong that I did not know whether he regarded me as a passing stranger, to whom politeness suggested great courtesy, or if he, too, felt the sincere friendship that I did.

A few days later, however, he found the way to express his feelings, after the picturesque fashion of his country. We had returned to Nyanza at his insistent invitation, and there he gave a fiesta in our honour, at which all the splendour his court still retains could be displayed for our amusement.

The big place in front of the casino-palace became so filled with riotous barbaric colour, with savage and beautiful rhythms, with incredible and hypnotic physical grace and movement, that the anachronistic white building, with Rudahigwa's motor-car standing before it, faded out of consciousness.

Watussi virgins, the professional dancers of the

court, with slim, bronzed bodies, naked but for a fringed belt of antelope skin around the hips, advancing and receding in long lines, their proud little heads poised high on their long, slender necks, their crested coiffures accentuating their thin, triangular faces. Now one, dancing a solo part to the rhythmic clapping of her companions. Now two in a dance of ever-increasing frenzy until one's nerves strain for the delayed climax.

Batwa pygmies, with their stout little bodies, their marvellous archery, their songs and dances, bringing us a gust of the sinister, mysterious equatorial forest as they re-enact a hunt with dramatic vividness that leaves us in no doubt of the adversary—*ngagi*, the great gorilla of the mountains.

Superb Watussi warriors, who, at the harsh, syncopated music of the orchestra, spring into being before our eyes as new men, wild creatures of flame, having nothing in common with the gracious, statuesque individuals with whom we had been quietly conversing a few minutes before. The flowing, classical toga is cast aside, and with it goes all the calm and Oriental aloofness of their previous manner. Head covered with a yellow lion mane, breast adorned with pearls and embroideries, hips bound by an antelope skin with a long fringe of otter, each warrior flings himself with all his soul into the dance which dramatises the glamorous exploits of his belligerent ancestors. Eyes sparkling, mouth open in ferocious grimace, shining teeth clenched, chest arrogantly inflated, head disdainfully thrown back, the dancers challenge imaginary enemies to mortal combats. Their rigid arms threateningly extended, their hands gripping the taut bow release the first arrows, while

their feet stamp impatiently on the ground to the accompaniment of the insolent jangle of bracelets and bells which garnish their ankles.

The duel begins, and we forget, in the ruthless episodes that follow, that the opponent is a phantom, so vivid is the dancer's art. With a perfect choreography which, instead of appearing to be what it is—the result of a science as ancient as the race and patiently learned during years of training—seems to have all the violence and spontaneity of a true action, the warrior attacks, retreats, feints, succumbs for a moment, with renewed courage again throws himself on the enemy. His head literally rests at times upon his breast, or upon his back, or spins round and round as if he wishes to give it momentum to throw it as a projectile at his adversary. Fantastic leaps in complete disdain for the law of gravity, making him appear for the moment to be suspended in the air ; contortions of limbs that the leopard might envy ; rippling muscles that may well daunt the enemy, visualising the clasp of those sinuous arms. The final struggle, the pride of knowing how to fight, the joy of the victory ! And then, at the sudden silence of horns and tom-toms, a high-pitched cry—" I, for my King, am ready to die !"—followed by the rush of fifty pages, warriors in miniature, come to celebrate with cries and leaps and movements in perfect unison, the triumph of a Butussi prince.

And always and unceasingly the Bahutu musicians, with horn and tambour, play at will upon the sensibilities of their audience, now whipping them up to a crescendo of excitement, now lulling them in a languorous dream, dominating, controlling, enveloping. Until at last—several hours it had been,

although only the passage of the sun could have convinced us of it—they tired of the pretence, and virgins and warriors and pygmies fell silent to yield the scene to the real masters of the day—the drums.

It was toward the end of this grand final concert that Rudahigwa gave me the proof of his friendship that I had been desiring, though so subtly expressed that it had to be explained to me.

Suddenly, as if impulsively, he left his place at my side and went to one of the biggest of the drums—“The one whose voice makes everyone tremble”—and, taking from the hands of the Bahutu musician the two wooden sticks, began himself to play.

At once the other drums and the horns ceased, and the hundreds of spectators filling the wide plaza listened intently to the fervid improvisation of their sovereign.

“It is the first time that Rudahigwa has played before a white man,” M. Lenaerts, at my left, murmured speculatively.

I looked up at the old Butussi prince on my right—*up*, for he towered seven feet nine—and he smiled as he caught my eye.

“The King is thy friend, O white,” he said gently. “He is friend to thee, our King.”

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE "GENTLE APE"

THE road from Usumbura to Bukavo is a beautiful accomplishment of engineering, and although I had passed over it many times, it did not fail once more to evoke my admiration. In less than fifty miles it climbs three thousand feet; yet it is so well constructed that even our long and heavily loaded trucks negotiated every turn and twist with the greatest ease.

It is interesting to note that the history of this road, already covering a period of ten years, does not record a single instance of accident, largely due to a system of signals as primitive as possible, but not for that the less efficient and ingenious. Perched here and there on the tops of the highest mountains scaled by the sinuous ribbon of the road are posts of observation kept by two native signalmen. When a motor-car arrives at one of these posts it is stopped by a barrier, which remains closed only if another vehicle is coming from the opposite direction. When a motor-car starts from one barrier the next post is advised by optic and acoustic signals; the first being a petrol tin raised on a pulley, the second another tin energetically beaten tom-tom fashion.

Reaching Bukavo, that picturesque little town which, under a blue sky of Switzerland, reflects itself



in the limpid waters of the Lake Kivu and which now had gained the dignity of capital of the Province, we stopped only long enough to visit the authorities and immediately thereafter continued our journey toward the Tchibinda Forest.

There, on two previous expeditions of mine, I had studied the giant gorilla of the mountains, and on the first bagged an enormous male, which later proved to be the record of the world, as it weighed 482 pounds, had a minimum circumference of the chest of 57 inches, measured 6 feet 9 inches from head to foot, and no less than 8 feet 9 inches from the ground to the tip of the uplifted arm. Such a colossus was Old Man Gorilla, "*Moami Ngagi*," as he was called in the depths of the forest !

The emplacement of my old camps was till there to remind me of him and to be used once more, at less than a quarter of a mile from the dark green wall of the forest. But instead of the naked wilderness that had surrounded my tents the first time, now we found a flourishing cinchona plantation ; and in the centre, replacing the prospector's tent of M. Ernsterhoff which had stood there on my second expedition, now we saw his big house, and from it at once came to us the welcome blessing of a comically large basket of marvellous strawberries, as luscious and as perfumed as the ones I thought grew only in the Italian mountains.

And there I met once more Sultani Kasciula, the chief of the Mambuti pygmies, whom I wanted, as always before, for my guide—an old friend whom the readers of my previous books may remember.<sup>1</sup>

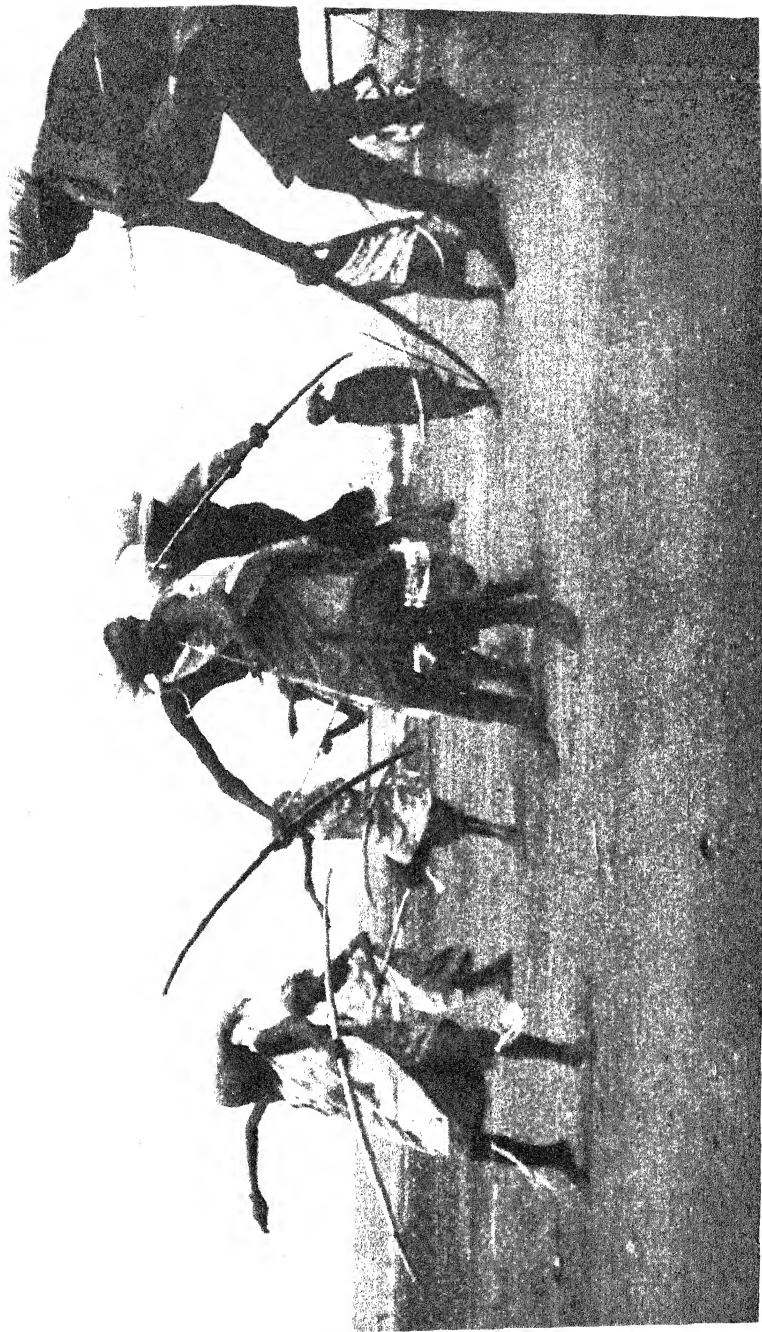
<sup>1</sup> See "The King of the Gorillas," 1932 ; "Tom-toms in the Night," 1932 ; "Hidden Africa," 1933, by Attilio Gatti.

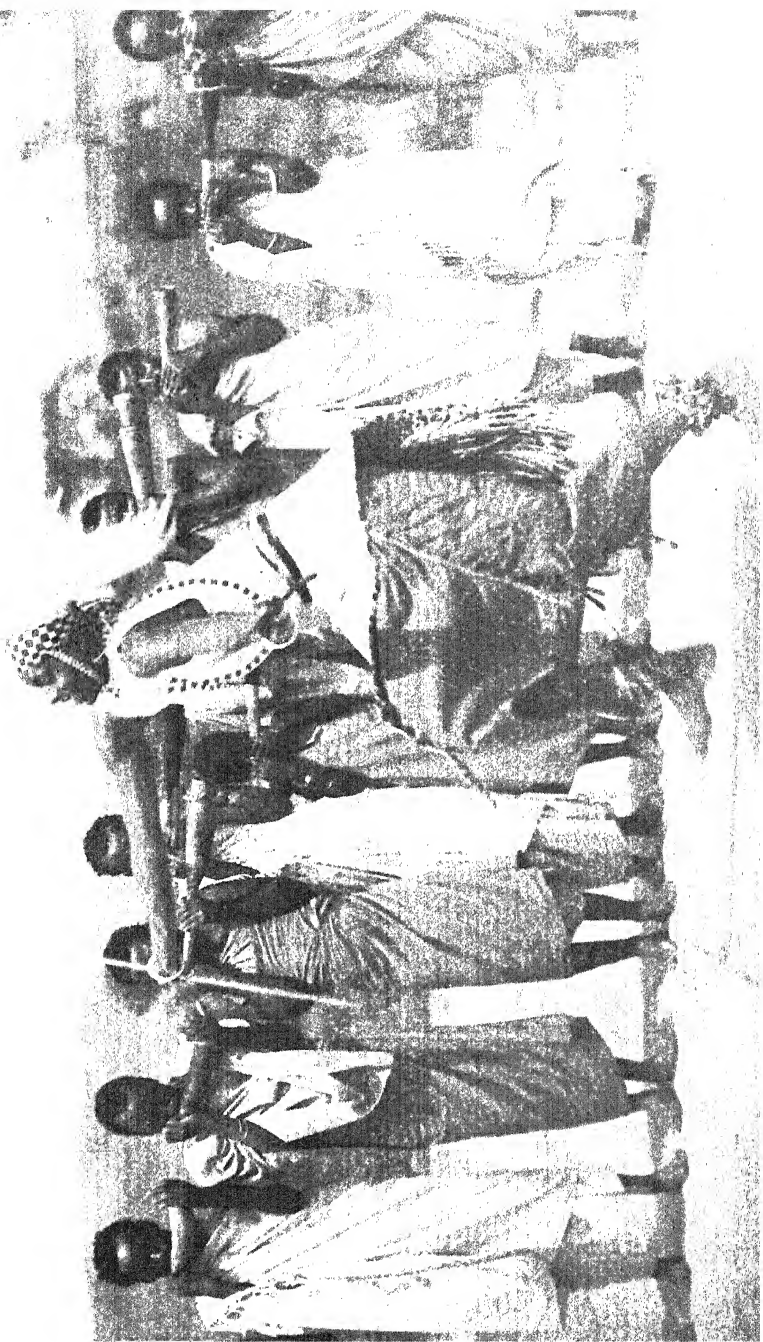
He greeted me with all the expansiveness one could expect from an old pygmy chief; that is, with a furious scratching of his nose, a "*Yambo, Bwana*," accompanied by a grimace which was meant to be a smile, and a request as direct as anxious for some tobacco.

It impressed me not a little to see him wearing an old solaro blouse and to note that his following of pygmies sported shorts and jerseys and caps. Evidently all presents left by the various expeditions which in these last years have been to Tchibinda on more or less fortunate attempts to photograph, capture or hunt the gorilla, and which have all been obliged to resort to the Mambuti for guides, as without them it would be impossible even to try to penetrate the mountain forest. The following days showed me clearly how this contact with white people had spoilt the Mambuti. Instead of the timid, simple, serviceable beings I had known for years who were grateful and happy for the smallest present of salt or tobacco, I now found lazy, avid, ridiculous caricatures of men whose highest ambition is to ape the white in everything and who are ready to make use of any subterfuge in order to obtain without work food, tobacco, clothes and presents with which they are never satisfied.

Although already old and partially supplanted in the command of his little tribe by a son of his, an insolent, talkative boy, Kasciula again revealed himself as the authoritative chief, the magnificent tracker, the courageous hunter of four years before, each time during the following days that we found ourselves near the gorillas.

I, instead, was entering the Tchibinda Forest with





very different feelings and hopes than I had had on the two previous expeditions I had made there. I wanted this time, as on my former visits to Tchibinda, to observe the gorillas for as much time as they would permit me to, to study their life and habits and character. But in the past I had been working alone with no responsibility for another's safety, and with a "life insurance" on my own represented by my rifle and the permit to shoot a gorilla, the first time for the Royal University of Florence, the second for the Witwatersrand University of Johannesburg. This meant that when the worst came and I felt that the gorilla attack was a deadly one, I had only to shoot the big male of the herd, without compunction, as it was a part of my undertaking to obtain such specimens for the scientific institutions that needed them, and I would have had to procure them one day or another in any event.

This time, however, I wanted more than all else to obtain photographs and a film of the great apes in the various attitudes and events of their life ; when they fed, drank, played, fought amongst themselves ; when they walked on all-fours or stood on their hind legs ; when they built their night nests and shelters ; when they ran through the tunnels their passage had excavated in the vegetation ; when they gathered for their mysterious meetings in the centre of a secluded clearing ; when they spanked their young ones and taught them all the forest craft.

I had never deceived myself about the tremendous difficulties of such a job in such a dark, entangled forest. But with infinite patience, the help of my companions, the guidance of the extraordinary

knowledge that the pygmies seem to have of even the most intimate thoughts of a gorilla, and the special apparatus and cameras and supersensitive films I had prepared at the cost of months of work and great expense, I was certain that I would get results good enough to recompense a stay of several months in the forest, and to bring to students and to the general public valuable new information regarding gorilla life.

But it was imperative that if some ape lost his temper with us, and one of us were compelled to shoot, this would not put us in trouble with the authorities. I explained very clearly to the high officials in Brussels that it was our first interest to avoid an accident of this kind, both because it would have ended our work, and because we wanted to do only what was agreeable to the Government. I reminded them that never before in my African life had I broken a law covering game, nor even taken advantage of the permits which had been so generously granted to me ; and that nothing was farther from me than the desire to shoot a third gorilla, and that if obliged to do so to protect our lives I would never advance any claim for the spoils, but would carefully prepare them at my expense and keep them at the disposal of the Musée du Congo Belge.

But in the end the Administrateur-General des Colonies, evidently on the advice of the Agricultural Department of the Colonial Ministry, made the following answer : " Your cameraman will have to work in such conditions that the gorillas do not feel menaced and do not charge. I call particularly your attention to the fact that the case of self-defence

cannot be invoked by the hunter who intentionally should have directly or indirectly disturbed, followed or molested this animal or the herd to which it belongs."

In these circumstances our work was very badly hampered from the beginning, as to photograph animals, especially in the shadow of that labyrinth of a forest, without approaching them was an absurdity ; and on the other side, I did not want at any cost to disregard the instructions received nor to risk the lives of my companions.

But I wanted to try, hoping that perhaps some unexpected chance would occur, giving me the opportunity of getting at least some good photographs.

Before relating how our efforts fared, I feel compelled to say a few words regarding the policy adopted by the Agricultural Department of the Colonial Ministry on the question of gorilla protection, not as a justification for my lack of success, or even, less as a criticism engendered by personal motives but solely as a respectful contribution toward the clearer understanding of the whole problem in the general interest.

Various explorers and scientists on the basis of practical knowledge they have acquired during long journeys in the forest have repeatedly written that gorillas are still very numerous. And from their own experiences they have quoted many cases where the greatest African ape has attacked pygmies, as well as white men, without the slightest provocation.

On the other hand, game wardens and other persons who for one reason or another want a rigid

protection, have taken a completely opposite standing, sometimes without ever having put their foot in the forest. Pronouncing as "fakes" such accounts from explorers and scientists; without discrimination disbelieving by principle every case where self-defence is pled, they sustain that the gorillas are reduced to an infinitesimal number, that they are rapidly approaching extinction, and that, in any case, they are absolutely inoffensive, peaceful animals.

Supposing for the moment that both sides of the question have been exaggerated, unconsciously and in good faith, through the personal convictions, interests or desires of the individuals concerned, there remain only the Territorial Administrators to give the best first-hand, impartial advice.

First, because as a general rule they are unprejudiced in the matter, absorbed as they are in so many and much more important functions. Then, they, and they alone, know intimately their own territories. And finally, they have the confidence of the native populations and from them can learn more about gorillas than from any living white man.

But so far as I know, the Territorial Administrators have never yet had a chance to tell in full liberty and frankness what they feel and know about this question. They undoubtedly receive a huge number of circulars on the subject; they have even been consulted in the matter, but in such a way that any one of them who did not want to involve himself in serious trouble, felt obliged to answer in accordance with the well-determined opinion already definitely expressed by many of his superiors



in the Brussels offices from which they have never moved.

This valuable disinterested source of information being unused, or badly used, the opinion of strangers and non-officials being disregarded or intentionally ignored, officialdom has believed only and adopted entirely the word of game wardens, Parc National Albert officials and extreme partisans of protection. With the result that some axioms have been very strongly established, and direct the whole policy of the matter :

(i) That a gorilla is a peaceful animal which would never attack a human being except in a case of extreme self-defence after it had been seriously menaced or badly wounded.

(ii) That there are so very few gorillas left and that they are so rapidly approaching extinction that

(iii) not a single gorilla must be captured or killed, either intentionally or with the "excuse" of legitimate self-defence.

To show that I am not exaggerating, I wish to quote some personal instances.

I have written in my notes a talk I had in Rutchuru last year, when I was on my way from the Tchibinda Forest toward the Ituri, with Mr. Henry Hackars, then an official in the Parc National Albert. In the past, during his long brilliant Colonial career, Mr. Hackars has been one of the mightiest hunters of Congo, and in every place one goes, one still hears of his energetic prowess with elephants, buffaloes, rhinos, etc., etc., etc., and of the attacks which he sustained, once in the Epulu Forest when pygmy elephants compelled him to seek safety on the

branches of a tree where he was obliged to remain for several hours ; another time when elephants on the Beni-Irumu road barred the way to his car and smashed it, forcing him to a speedy flight ; and, more recently, when a leopard jumped on him, inflicting various wounds.

Yet Mr. Hackars, who to-day has become a partisan of the rigid protection of game, and who, as such, has great merits towards the development of the Parc National Albert, did not put on a pair of gloves—as we say in Italian—to contradict every word of mine and to impress well upon me that “no African wild animal will ever attack a man except if it has just been badly wounded, seriously provoked, or deeply frightened.”

The *Cape Times* of Cape Town published on the 6th of June, 1935, the following :—

#### A GENTLE APE

“The legend of the gorilla’s ferocity invented by the early traveller, du Chaillu, and perpetuated by Martin Johnson and Gatti himself, is completely exploded.

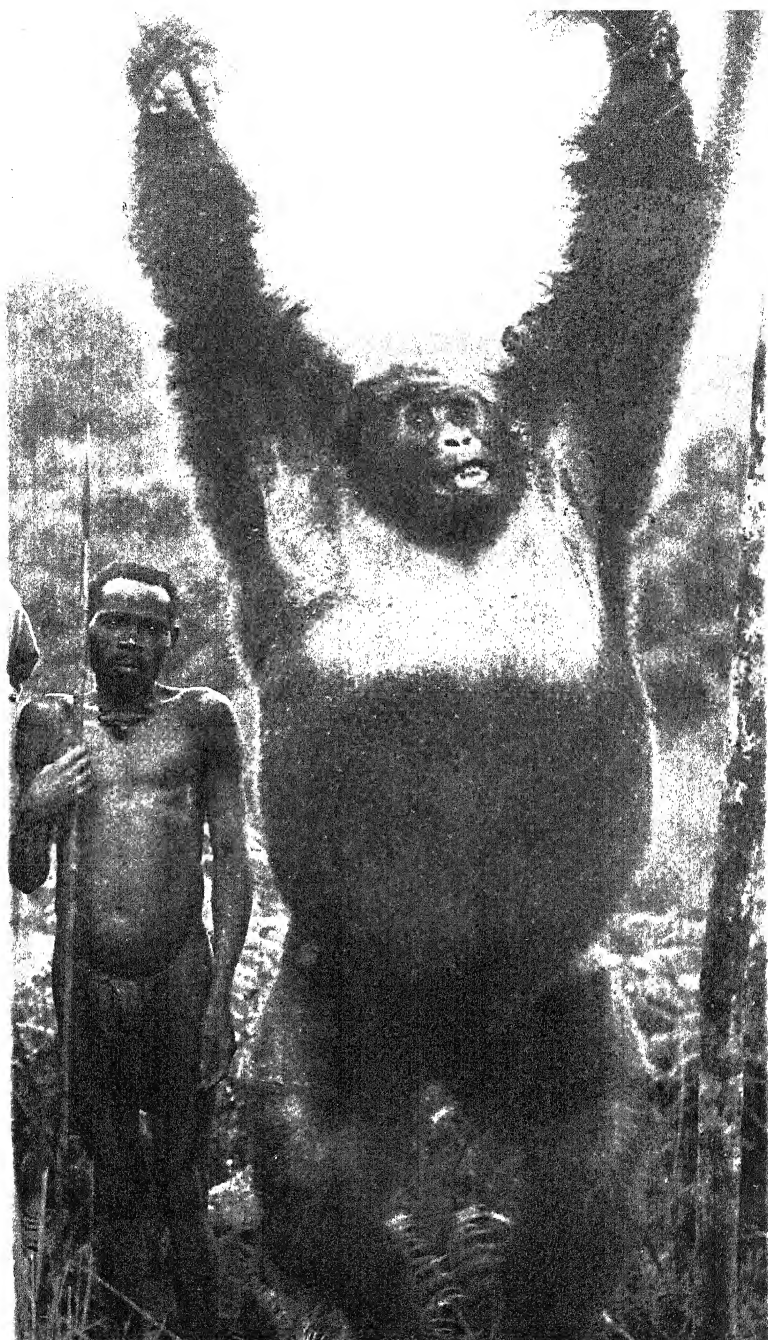
Captain Pitman, the game warden of Uganda, who passed through Cape Town a few months ago, has said again and again that the gorilla is a shy, inoffensive creature—and he ought to know.

But if you relentlessly pursue a timid giant and his family through the gloom of the Equatorial forest you should not be surprised to find yourself hurled against a tree.

Since I have learned that gorillas—unlike other apes—are extraordinarily clean animals, and totally free from parasites, I think very highly of them, and I share the feelings of a Belgian Ambassador to the United States, who, paraphrasing a famous slogan, said the responsible countries should co-operate to make ‘a world safe for gorillas.’”

Now, I have never met Captain Pitman, and I do

[facing: “A GENTLE APE.” GIANT GORILLA  
SHOT BY COMMANDER GATTI





not know whether he has ever seen a specimen of the Giant Gorilla of the mountains, the only gorillas of which I wrote in the past and of which I am talking to-day, as I have no knowledge at all of the smaller variety of the lowlands. Nor on the sole faith of that newspaper report can I understand if the writer or Captain Pitman himself accused me, too, of "perpetuating the legend of the gorilla's ferocity." But I am sure that Captain Pitman, and the *Cape Times* journalist, would be the first to see the dangers of a too absolute generalisation.

Few persons who possess some knowledge of an animal would ever dare to say that every specimen of that race is either good or bad, this or that. As an instance, after having been in the saddle for the best part of my days from the time I was four years old, and after having spent ten years as an officer in the Italian cavalry and two at the Pinerolo School, if someone asked my opinion of the character of horses, I certainly could not say, "The horse is a very gentle animal," or "The horse is very vicious," or "The horse is very stupid," or "very intelligent." If I made such a statement everybody would have the right to call me a perfect fool. All I could reasonably say would be, "Having owned, mounted, and known well in my life about, say, one hundred Italian thoroughbreds, I found that at least sixty per cent. of them were extremely good-natured, and perhaps only ten per cent. really vicious, the remaining thirty per cent. being so nervous and high-strung that their reactions were completely unreliable and dependent upon daily conditions of weather, training and effort required. At any rate, almost all of them

were quite intelligent, so far as horse-intelligence goes."

Isn't that so? And you could say the same thing, if you had had a long experience with them, regarding Irish jumpers, German hounds or Spanish cows.

But how can one ever give an absolute, definite judgment upon all wild animals, or even upon one, as the gorilla, when almost nothing is known about its character, impulses, habits, inclinations and conditions of life?

After having met one or two specimens—or perhaps none at all—of one variety of gorilla, how can one declare that *all* gorillas are "gentle," or "timid," or exactly the contrary?

As for myself, my own personal experience, extended over a total period of a year spent in the interior of the Tchibinda Forest, was that if a herd of gorillas discovered someone following its movements, even at a respectful distance, about eight out of ten of the animals for the first or perhaps the second time would go quietly away, while the two having a bad temper would attack straightway the very first moment they detected the stranger's presence.

Of the eight remaining, perhaps three might be really peaceful creatures which would continue to disappear any other time they were approached, but five would very soon lose their patience. Angrily they would beat their chests and utter their formidable roars—not the whining, pitiful little sound that someone has recently described, I can assure you. And after this warning, to try to draw nearer to them, even if very quietly and with every

precaution not to disturb them would mean to become involved in an attack which might occasionally be diverted, but more often would result in the wounding or the death of either the ape or the man.

## CHAPTER TEN

### I MEET *NGAGI* AGAIN

IN my first African years the hunting mania possessed me as completely as it possesses every other beginner. Soon, however, I found that I had lost interest except for the rarest and most difficult specimens, and I limited my shooting to what was indispensable for collections I had promised to museums and for food for myself and my men. Later on my point of view evolved to such a degree that before starting on this present expedition I refused any commission entailing hunting ; and during the last eighteen months spent in Africa I have not killed one single animal, not even when it would have been more than justified, almost necessary in fact, to break the unending and not so healthy diet of tins, eggs and wiry chickens.

I can therefore honestly say that to-day, in theory as well as in practice I am an enthusiastic partisan of game protection, and the first to admire without reservation the principles on which, for example, the Parc National Albert was created. It is a great merit for Belgium to have so strictly protected the gorillas in the immense expanses of this sanctuary. It may be indispensable that new huge extensions of territory are continuously added to it. But I am not a fanatic, and I do not believe that preservation can be an end in itself.

It is obvious that a species is not protected, a



reserve is not founded, merely to create a comfortable job for somebody, or to make the proud monopoly of a Society. To prevent the destruction of a rare species so that our descendants may not be deprived of one or another of the creatures that Nature has bestowed on us, is a beautiful, unselfish idea. But it will become a practically beautiful and unselfish undertaking only if it allows to-day's science to acquire new knowledge ; to-day's humanity to enjoy these same creatures through living specimens to be seen in zoos and mounted ones in museums, and through photographs and descriptions disseminated by the universal modern messengers, the cinema and the newspaper.

It seems to me that King Leopold III of Belgium, then Crown Prince, expressed this sentiment in the most admirable way when in November, 1933, he said to a meeting of the African Society : " We wish also to undertake the methodical and scientific exploration of our incomparable domain. . . . We do not feel justified in withholding from men the splendours and sources of emotions to be found there."

Now that the Parc National Albert and its various annexes and dependencies can be relied upon to preserve the gorilla for the future, could not the other zones where gorillas are to be found be opened, with all possible discrimination and reasonable limitation, to the student, the museum and zoological park collectors, the journalist, cinematographer, photographer and artist? And could not this be done without placing them, as is the case to-day, under conditions where they have either to renounce their work before beginning it, or to undertake it at the

risk of their own lives if they do not wish to break the law?

Once more I want to say that I am not speaking for myself. To-day I have had my fill of the beastly mountain forest and the giant gorilla, and I would not go back if I were granted all the permits in the world. But there are hundreds of zoos and museums of every country which have hitherto been unable to secure a specimen of gorilla; there are scores of scientists who could make useful studies, and dozens of other individuals who would happily devote years of work to observe the habits and customs of the gorilla, to discover the still unknown secrets of its life, to photograph and describe it.

For this work, of course, no one would dream to touch the Parc National Albert, the restrictions of which are proverbial all over Congo. And not very popular either, if I may judge from the talks I have had on the matter with hundreds of Belgians, and from the opinion repeatedly expressed by the *Avenir Colonial Belge*, a Belgian paper published in Leopoldville.

In a recent issue of this paper, which might be supposed to represent the thought of the majority of its readers—that is, of about half Congo's white population—it was stated in an editorial: "The Draconian regulations—so Draconian, even, as to become absurd—which concern the Parc Albert, seem to have been conceived in the brain of an old 'Cacique,' and recall those tulip-maniacs who died of a heart-stroke if someone by mistake damaged one of their flowers."

But leaving religiously alone the Parc Albert and its annexes (and "God alone knows how many they

are ; every day some new one is created," sighed the editor in the same issue of the *Avenir Colonial Belge*), and considering only the zones not yet incorporated into sanctuaries and reserves, even the granting of a dozen or two permits each year would not endanger the continuation of the species. For only in these zones there are more thousands of gorillas than there are fanatical believers of their complete protection in the whole world.

In 1929, when I first entered the gorilla country, I made much of the figures which were semi-officially quoted to me, and I believed and wrote<sup>1</sup> : " These laws (of strict protection) are extremely just and necessary for this species, so interesting to science and still to-day so little known and studied, seem destined to rapid annihilation. . . . Considering that in all the district no more than five or six hundred apes survive, it is easy to understand how providential was the institution of the Parc Albert, created especially to protect the survival of this species. . . . Outside of this marvellous reserve . . . there are some one or two hundred gorillas living in the Tchibinda Forest . . . and in the Baraka peninsula."

I feel most apologetic in quoting myself. If I do, it is very humbly, only to acknowledge my former mistake—not in admiring the idea behind the creation of the national sanctuary, but in blindly accepting those calculations which I later found were based much more on the desire of proving the necessity of certain regulations than on a careful, exact investigation of facts.

The extent of my error I learned only in the

<sup>1</sup> See " Tom-toms in the Night," by Attilio Gatti, pp. 103-104.

following years after having visited new territories, discussed the matter with many officials of the various services, with numerous farmers and missionaries, with natives and pygmies of other tribes ; and after having myself acquired a wider experience during long stays in different parts of the forest.

I found a far greater number of gorillas in the Tchibinda Forest itself than I had originally believed to exist there. But they are nothing in comparison with the herds that can be found in the more or less unexplored expanses to the west, south and north. Gorillas abound in many sections where formerly their presence was not even suspected, as in the Beni Territory, where we worked for many months, and in the Mambasa Territory, where we have often been. And in other regions, such as the Lubero Territory, one cannot even estimate the thousands in existence ; nor can even the natives themselves give any idea of the formidable number of these great apes which often attack them and continuously devastate their gardens.

I therefore feel perfectly justified in saying that an accurate, patient investigation made in all the gorilla countries directly or indirectly known by the white man would show enormous, even if necessarily approximate, figures. And that, large as these figures might be, they would always be quite inferior to the actual gorilla population, as they could not take into consideration all the intact reservoirs of all the *tabu* zones in the very heart of the forest, where neither white nor black has yet been.

Closing this long parenthesis and returning to my narrative, my last trip to the Tchibinda Forest under such hopeless conditions for our work could certainly

not be considered the wisest employment of our time. But it was not much out of the way of our itinerary. And as a sentimental attachment to the past and a vague hope for the immediate future had brought me back there again, I had at least to try to make the best of it.

My first care in organising our work with the pygmies was to provide for the worst, if it had to happen ; meanwhile doing everything in my power to avoid as far as humanly possible any complications. Accordingly, as I implicitly trusted Dugdale's sharp eye and serene coolness, I decided that each day, as soon as we were near the gorillas, our little column would take this order : Dugdale, with the only rifle, would proceed immediately behind Kasciula with instructions not to fire in any case, not even if we were attacked, until I gave him formally our pre-arranged signal ; then myself, armed only with a camera and followed by three or four of the best pygmies carrying the indispensable material, such as spare cameras and films, food and water. Finally, when with us, Whetham would come armed with a shotgun to protect our rear and in the meantime to see that in an emergency the pygmies did not run away, as has happened to me at other times.

It was in this order that Dugdale and I set out on the first day, and after less than four hours' march we took contact with a herd of gorillas. Even before the frightful roar of a male sounded at a score of feet from us, I was aware of the proximity of the apes by the familiar gesture of Kasciula who, having suddenly stopped, raised his right arm ready to throw his spear.

Some seconds of silence followed that warning

roar, then Kasciula, having consulted me with his eyes, slowly reassumed the advance, opening a passage with his crescent-shaped machete, his spear thrust well forward ; we following each at less than a foot from the other, Dugdale alert to his responsibility, I to the necessity of being quick as lightning if I wanted to get a photograph.

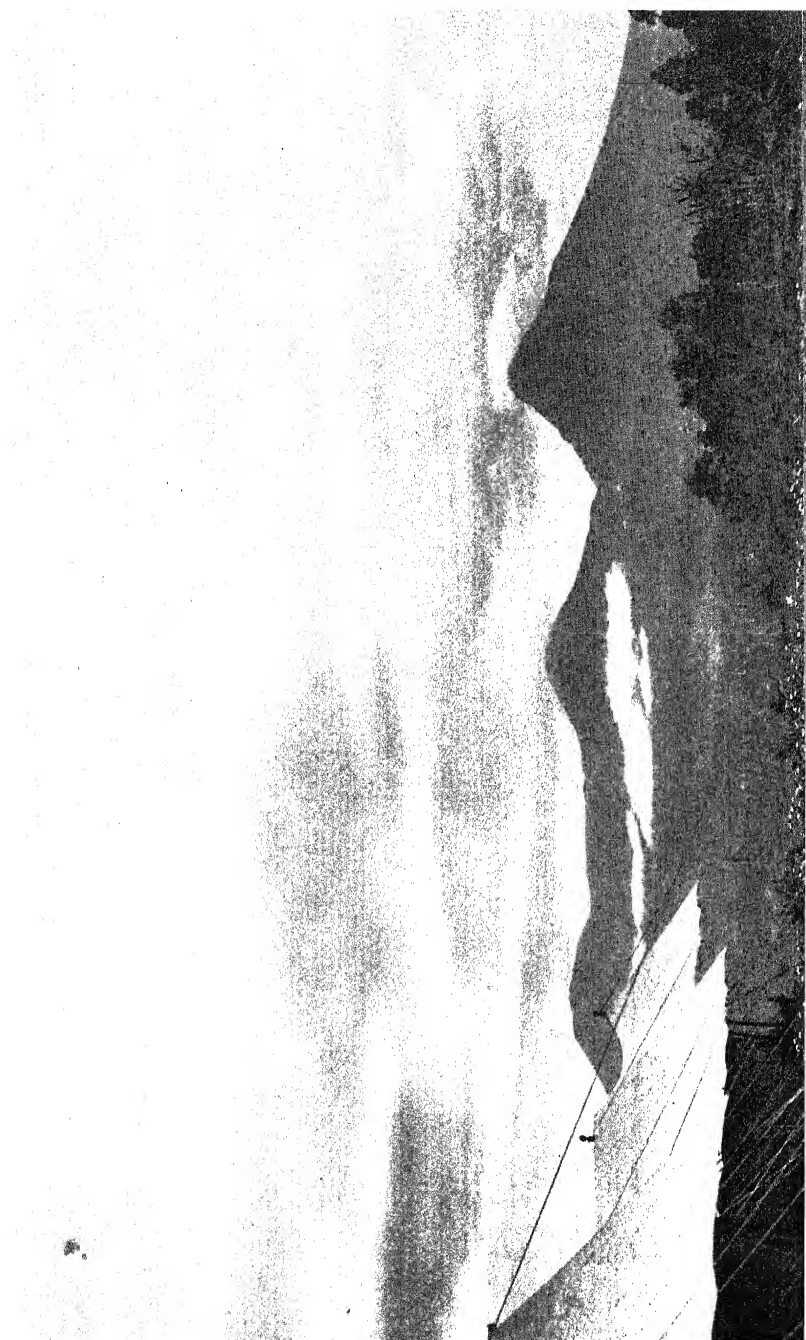
A second roar, more threatening than the first, nailed us to the spot. A dark shadow flashed between two dark trunks, accompanied in its passage by the click of the camera. Some crackings of broken branches, some dry leaves crunched under foot here and there—the herd was going away in a rustling of leaves which sounded like a waterfall.

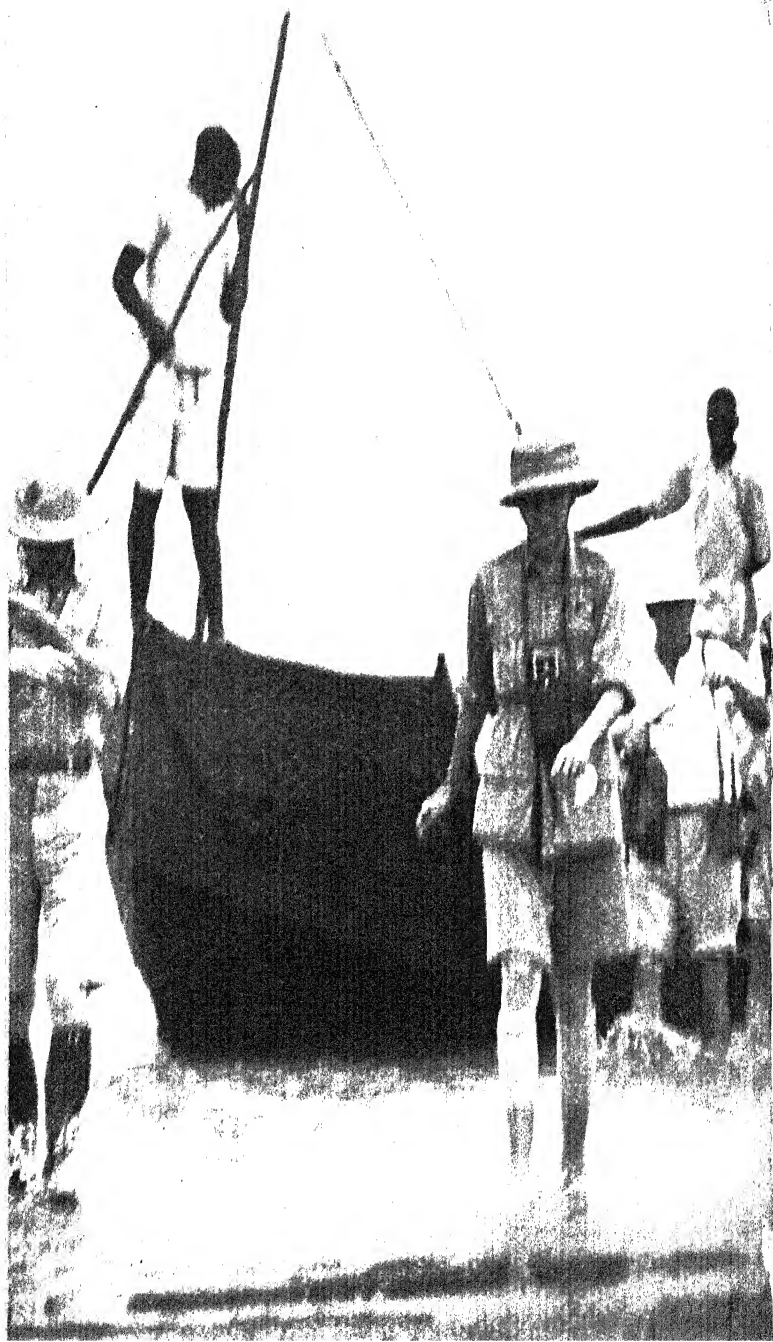
Twice again that same day the scene was repeated over a period of several hours, each time we managed to contact the herd. But each time this happened in a point of the forest so dark that even though I managed to snap a photograph during that quick passage of black shadows, nothing could impress the films, as superpanchromatic as they were.

A fourth time, tired to death, we came so near to the gorillas as to detect their presence by the strong acrid odour even before the usual rolling of drums and the shattering roar sounded from behind a thick curtain of vegetation. At once Dugdale knelt to leave the field free for my lens. Another roar sounded just in front of Kasciula. And the back and the neck of the little old man stiffened so resolutely, his hand grasping the spear raised so decidedly, all his attitude was so firm and courageous, that I couldn't resist getting a picture.

That little click was enough to snap the temper of the animals. The curtain was furiously shaken

[*facing*: CAMP AT RUTCHURU, IN VIEW OF  
RWANDA'S THREE GREATEST VOLCANOES







just before us—before my camera, ready and waiting, Kasciula, immobile as a statue, and Dugdale, who looked at me with eyes shining with excitement.

"Ready?" I murmured to him.

At less than six feet from us, towering over our heads, the enormous face of the gorilla appeared, his reddened eyes gleaming, his big mouth wide open and showing sharp, yellow teeth. One second, during which I feared that the ape would jump on us and make it indispensable to shoot. But the point of Kasciula's spear glittered in the air at perhaps two feet from that so horribly human face. I shouted just in time to stop his movement, and the vision had disappeared.

And we, for that day, had had enough.

After two days of rest, and many hours of march, again we found ourselves near to what Kasciula assured us was the same herd. And it must have been, for this time from the very first moment the leader of the herd lost no time in giving us a warning. From the stiff climb we were making, we saw between the leaves his great hairy mass precipitating itself towards us, balancing on its short widespread legs in a great noise of leaves and branches. So threatening and enormous, that even Kasciula lost his aplomb and with a jump of an agility unsuspected from his little old legs, he removed himself to a position well behind us.

"Shoot in the air!" I had just the time to tell Dugdale, and almost in the same instant the sharp report of his rifle answered. Just in time. At only four feet from us the giant had violently swerved toward the right, disappearing from our sight and in a few minutes from our hearing.

Disgusted at having done so many hours of hard march for nothing, a bit discouraged by the new and worse experience, we went dispiritedly back toward the far camp, both of us emerging from our mournful silence only to propose every now and then some new idea for accomplishing our purpose, which the other immediately pronounced impossible.

Two other days my companions passed in the forest without having the luck of meeting any gorillas. Then again we all went out together, accompanied by Mr. Ravenna, a friend of mine who was our guest in camp for a few days. But even on this day the only spectacle of ape-life I was able to photograph was the meals of Kasciula and his pygmies. As soon as we stopped for a little rest, they would extract from their pouches pieces of conglomerate of the most repulsive odour and aspect, which they devoured avidly with manners and noises to make a gorilla envious.

Toward the end of the day we surprised a herd of gorillas in a clearing from which, at our arrival, they darted to cover. I decided then that the best plan would be for Whetham and Ravenna, together with Kasciula, to make a detour in order to try to drive the gorillas back into the clearing, while Dugdale and I would keep well hidden at the edges, as this seemed to be the first opportunity we had had to take some photographs in a good light. But the apes, either because in spite of every precaution of ours they had detected our manoeuvre, or because they were too clever to come back into the open when they knew intruders were near, instead of retiring, compelled the surrounding party to retire.

As soon as they sensed the approach of the little

group, two males jumped to the attack, beating their chests and roaring deafeningly. Ravenna and Whetham, who on this particular day were both armed with rifles, shouldered their weapons, staring fixedly into the eyes of the two animals which, as from a jackbox, had suddenly appeared just in front of them. The temptation to shoot was strong, but they knew how to resist it, and before that always more threatening attitude of the gorillas they began slowly to retreat, one at a time, preceded by Kasciula, until they reached the clearing where we were waiting, fearing to hear a shot at any moment.

To continue in attempts of this kind seemed to us not only useless, but a dangerous tempting of fate. So, although with regret, two days later we turned our back on the Tchibinda Forest toward the Ituri Forest, six hundred miles to the north.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### FIGHTING WITH EQUATORIAL HURRICANES

BETWEEN the Kidwiji Island, half as long as the whole of Lake Kivu, and the steep mountainous shores ; among the hundred enchanted little islands of the north ; through the Bay of Saké, at the north-west, and its under bay of Bebandana, whose entrance was almost blocked by the 1912 eruption, roams twice a week the s.s. *Général Tombeur*.

Full of importance, this pygmy transatlantic to which the Comité National du Kivu gave birth five years ago (and what a hard birth too, having to transport every part of it from Europe to this lake, five thousand feet high, and in the very centre of Africa) has every possible comfort. Extremely pretty, tiny cabins with running water, showers and electricity ; a good-sized suite *de luxe* ; a well-furnished saloon ; a good radio set, and a very obliging captain, who also takes care that the kitchen is kept according to the best Belgian traditions.

The *Général Tombeur* can load with her own winches, and carry on the lower deck and in the hold as many as four or five cars and trucks, and it was on her that we had counted to continue our trip north. But the cement quay of Bukavo was not then completed, and the old wooden pier was not strong enough for our heavy trucks. Mr. Morteihan, the

Governor of the Province, and the Cefaki, the enterprising railway company now owning and operating so well the *Général Tombeur*, were so kind as to offer to reinforce the old pier and to take every other necessary measure to ensure us a safe loading. But not wishing to put them to so much trouble, we decided to return to Usumbura, pass again through Nyanza and a good part of Rwanda, bending west to reach Rutchuru, via Ruhengeri and Goma, from where we could continue toward the Mountains of the Moon.

A quick, easy trip, we thought. But actually it brought us several days full of varied emotions.

The first alarm was given us by Mr. Lenaerts when we stopped in Nyanza to bid him a last good-bye. The road from Nyanza to Ruhengeri, we were told, was usually quite good and safe. But it was then still marked under the classification of "Roads occasionally practicable during the dry season," and we had arrived in the midst of particularly wet weather, extremely heavy rains having fallen uninterruptedly for the past few weeks, destroying the road faster than the territorial service could repair it.

However, just a few days before the Belgian expedition of our friend Commandant Brondeel had safely passed, and I could not see why I must give up while he had managed it with his trucks as big and heavy as ours.

In fact, although the road climbed up and down huge steep mountains, passed on narrow little bridges over appalling precipices or twisted around them in breath-taking curves, Whetham with his truck and my wife and I in our box-body, arrived safely at

Ruhengeri. Dugdale, who had gone through Kigali to get a supply of petrol, had not yet come, but we did not worry about him at the moment, and pushed ahead under the threats of the blackest world we had ever seen.

Black was the road of pulverised lava, black the earth surrounding it in its convulsion of lava lumps ; and even blacker the colossal volcanoes that on our right and our left sustained with the cyclopic pyramidal pillars the low, heavy ceiling of blackest-of-all clouds. Knowing how terrific are the hurricanes of that region, we hurried as much as we could, hoping to avoid the one impending above our heads. But we soon lost every illusion. Formidable thunder rolled from one side to the other of the horizon. Deafening cracklings of monstrous electrical discharges illuminated the whole blackness, other rumblings answered from the inside of the living volcanoes, and were followed by short earthquakes so violent that we felt shaken in our running motor-cars. From a deep gorge, a raging, whistling wind shot forth, flattening to the ground small trees and bushes, spitting into our eyes hard particles of lava, pushing so strongly against our cars as almost to overturn them. Then the cataracts fell, and in the orgy of the elements—thunder and lightning, earthquake, rain, hail and wind, all unchained—there was offered to us on the grand scale an awe-inspiring figuration of what the end of the world might be.

At any rate, if not the end of the world, at least the end of our own participation in it was at hand and would have befallen us if, unable to see anything more, we had not abruptly stopped our car. For we had just come to a shaking and shrieking halt, when

a huge incandescent ball fell from the tortured sky with a louder detonation than we had yet heard, and struck the ground a hundred feet ahead of us, excavating a deep hole in the road, and rolling away until with a great flash of light it melted into scorched air, together with the tree against which it had exploded.

Half-deafened and blinded, iced and wet to the bone in spite of the protection afforded by our car, again we started as soon as the fury subsided a little, navigating more than running in the turbulent stream into which the continuing cataracts had transformed the narrow road. Until we came to a signpost, rendered illegible by the darkness and the rain, but giving us the hope of approaching the only shelter we could expect to find in that vicinity.

Some time later the Gitwa Seventh Day Adventist Mission saw three miserable, muddy beings descend from two battered cars to wade across a sea of yellow water toward its hospitable door, behind which a huge fire, plenty of hot coffee and dry clothes were ready to restore to them a human appearance.

Even to-day, after so many months, remembering the chilly misery of the hours preceding our arrival at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Meunier, my heart sends toward their far Gitwa Mission a wave of gratitude and thanks.

As for Mr. Meunier, I wonder if our unheralded invasion left him memories as pleasant as ours ! For the following day his kindness led him to share with Whetham the back seat of our box-body when we started to search for Dugdale who seemed to have vanished into the air since we left him forty-eight hours before. And that trip was something not to be easily forgotten.

From Gitwa to Ruhengeri, there was one road only, so there could be no mistake. But from Kigali, Dugdale could have taken one of two roads to reach Ruhengeri ; the long one, which joined the road we had travelled over from Nyanza, and a new, shorter road just finished in those days and in all probability not yet inaugurated.

So again we ate up almost all the previous day's road, with all its dizzying spiral twists following every meander of the Nyawarungu ; then up and down escarpments to the big Catholic mission of Kabgaye where the road bifurcates, south to Nyanza, and east to Kigali, from which point Dugdale was supposed to have started the day before. Carefully, and with what emotions it can be imagined, we had looked down all those treacherous precipices as we drove along, but we had seen only the wrecks of the various vehicles that had rolled down them in the past. Of Dugdale and his truck, no trace.

With this negative result we reached Kigali, but it was Sunday, the few whites were not to be found in their offices and shops, and no information could be obtained from the natives. So, following the suggestion of Mr. Meunier, who knew the country well, we started along the new road which was still so soft that we had not made ten yards before we were obliged to stop and put on the chains.

The kilometres rapidly disappeared behind us, together with the light of the sun, and darkness found us slowly climbing a high mountain toward a sea of thick dark clouds. When finally we reached the top, the road had lost all its importance of a highway and become a track just big enough to give passage to a car ; and our journey, from a difficult



one, began to transform itself into an unending nightmare.

The country was absolutely deserted, or at least we never saw a single hut or man. It was already a miracle that we could see, or rather, divine the course of the track, so black and impenetrable was the fog through which we were slowly advancing. That Dugdale had passed this way was certain; but where he was at that moment we did not dare to think, so much the marks of his tyres zigzagged continuously from the steep side of the mountain to the emptiness on our left. Often we had to stop and look carefully with our torches to see if there was room enough for our car, as the trace of the outer rear wheel of the truck had disappeared, together with the margin of the road which it had kicked down the precipice.

I was so concentrated in driving that I could not see much outside of the road. But my three companions were able to look down into the dark mouth of those precipices, and it certainly was not an encouraging sight. To make things worse, the damp fog melted into a light rain which reflected the light of the headlamps in a maddening way, and a little farther the light rain became a heavy shower, making the clay of the road so slippery that although advancing at perhaps five miles an hour we were expecting any minute to be projected into space.

Up and down we continued, however, in the absolute darkness even when the shower augmented to the fury of a deluge, and down from the side of the mountain tempestuous cataracts fell upon the road, carrying with them big rocks and branches which bounced on the tiny strip of the road and

plunged into mysterious nothingness toward the bottoms of valleys thousands of feet below. The most elementary prudence would have stopped us, but there was the idea of Dugdale perhaps needing badly, urgently, our help which spurred us on, even if at a snail's pace.

In some places the waterfalls from the side of the mountain had dug away big holes in the middle of the road, straddling over which we passed with a sudden acceleration of engine and heart. In others, landslides descended which we let pass over us with a quick closing of eyes and gas. Once, one of these deluges of loose soil and small stones flooded the road ahead of us and continued for several minutes to flow down with the treacherous aspect of molten lava. Fortunately for us, when I stopped to let the worst of it pass I didn't turn off the engine. For immediately I felt the car gently pushed away from the mountain toward the precipice, and just by a split second I succeeded in putting in gear and leaping ahead before a new landslide, formed at the point where we had stopped, took away a good six or seven yards of the entire road in one great plunge into the abyss.

Sure as we were that nobody else would be so crazy as to take that road for several days to come, we were less worried about what we were leaving—or not leaving—behind us, than about what we would find—or not find—of both Dugdale and the road ahead of us. So we pushed on through the diminishing rain, going at an even slower pace each time the track descended, because then water and mud seemed to flush the car inexorably downward, and for the best part of the time a sudden use of the

brakes would have jerked us out of the road and of this world.

A big, deep hole having taken away three-quarters of the road, compelled us all to work in the mud for hours until we succeeded in filling it in almost completely, and my companions pushed the car over the hasty repair. Another hole stopped us a few minutes later, but there we made a discovery. A case with the E.G.A.E. initials of the expedition lay in the bottom of the hole. And turning our torches around we saw other familiar cases and bales piled up by the dozens on a small flat plateau outside of the road. And behind them, reflecting our lights, several eyes shone, which proved to belong to a score of frightened, shivering natives. Luckily, they knew Mr. Meunier. Otherwise we would never have seen anything more of them. Hesitatingly, shyly, they began to answer his questions, however, and to accept my cigarettes, and in a little while we could piece together that Dugdale, a few hours before, had almost gone over the edge—the tracks of the truck a bit behind that point showed it in such realistic language as to send a chill down our spines. But by some extraordinary chance, and his coolness, he had succeeded in swerving the truck back to safety. Then exhausted by a fight which must have lasted the whole day, he and his boys had unloaded the truck. These natives had crept out of their huts just in time to see a torrent of water, mud and stones fall on the truck, Dugdale jump to the wheel, and the truck lunge ahead, while a piece of the road disappeared before their eyes, taking with it the last case unloaded.

Some more hours, to make an emergency bridge

over the breach in the road ; some more kilometres of nightmare with the twenty natives barely able to control the car and keep it in equilibrium on what remained of the track after Dugdale's passage, and we were on the good old road under a sky which pulled our leg with the twinkle of a billion stars, come forth from who knows where on a night like that !

When we arrived at the mission the morning sun was appearing in the sky, and Dugdale had already disappeared into bed and into such a sleep that it continued all the day and the following night. Finally, two days later, having recovered all our baggage and carefully picked up the moment when another good hurricane was preparing, we left Gitwa and the kindly Meuniers to go to get stuck some miles away. And skidding, stopping just in time, unloading, pushing and reloading, the following day we got to Goma, where in the baths of the Hotel des Volcans we succeeded in disposing of the biggest part of the mud we had conscientiously collected during the aforesaid manoeuvre.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### TOWARD THE MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON

GOMA, and the souvenirs of a most rainy rainy-season, were left behind when once more we started north. An old signpost hidden in the vegetation told us that we were crossing a part of the Parc National Albert, but the only animal we saw was a hard-headed cow which stopped our cars for a quarter of an hour to show us a most monotonous and unrequested dance from one side of the road to the other.

Just the opposite situation we encountered after we left Rutchuru, where we had camped on the ruins of a fort around which only thirty-two years before the Belgian pioneers fought one of their most heroic battles against the Arab slave traders. Some twenty kilometres north of the post the road again crosses the Parc, but no signpost announces the limits. We could guess them, however, by the thousands of gazelles and antelopes barely interrupting their leisurely grazing to stare at our cars, or crossing the road immediately in front of them by entire galloping herds.

After about two hours we reached a chain of mountains barring the way to the plain, to the Parc and to the game, but not to the road which bravely scales it, to be used by very few cars or trucks during the day, by many lions and leopards during the night, judging from their frequent footprints.

Having arrived at the top of this chain, the Kabasha escarpment, and given a last glance to Lake Edward, a pool of misty, deadly heat in the middle of a barren plain, we came again in contact with the ubiquitous equatorial forest, at that height enriched by the silver green of the bamboo.

Here and there during the past five years huge slices have been cut away by fire and machete to give place to the long, very clean and orderly villages in which the Belgians, with beautiful effort, are concentrating in the reconstituted tribes and clans the primitive populations which were scattered along the shores of Lake Edward and the Semliki River.

This is the greatest, most humanitarian and courageous undertaking I have ever seen in action in Africa. And we were able to understand and appreciate it in all its value and extension when, before continuing north, we decided to make a short trip to the Semliki River.

Soon its thick, muddy waters, filled with crocodiles, carried us to an African scenery such as one can see in a Hollywood film or read about in the tales of the earliest explorers. From the Edward to the Albert, only two strips of entangled, yellowish vegetation, favourite hiding-place of hippos, separate the river from the sultriness, the oppressive heat of the plain.

It is the kingdom of desolation, sleeping sickness, leprosy, pest, famine. The hideous crocodiles, lying for hours on end in the sand, their great jaws gaping, or slowly swimming, insidiously hidden but for nose and eyes ; and the clouds of buzzards landing

heavily on the dry, leafless branches of the few fossilised-looking trees seem to live in a dead atmosphere, muffled by a dreadful veil of silence and fear.

The one redeeming feature of the scenery is Old Father Ruwenzori, high above so much misery, untouched by it, immaculate in his cap of pure, eternal snow, his head thrust toward the pale blue sky of the equator through an aureole of light clouds.

Surrounding him, as if to protect him from the contagion of the deadly plain, is the once fabulous country of the Mountains of the Moon, a fantastic land where a thousand small and large craters are visible through the over-powering vegetation, hiding in their depths the blue crystals of unbelievably beautiful little lakes. The whole region is teeming with animal life. Except for the rhino, there one can say that every African animal is represented ; and entire armies of parrots, geese, waterfowl, of multi-coloured birds of every kind, animate the evergreen foliage and the shores of the lakes.

Between this highland on the east, and the advance-guard tentacles of the great forest on the west, the plain stretches itself, sometimes as narrow as a corridor, sometimes an expanse so broad that the eye cannot follow it to its end. The first thing that impressed us was the fact that it appeared to be completely empty, deserted. Only at the distant edges, or where some group of stunted trees offered a problematic protection from the scorching sun, a few huts were visible, but these looked as if they had been long abandoned.

The walls of dried mud were scored with cracks large enough to thrust an arm through ; the roofs, made of elephant grass, were falling in pieces ; and between one hut and another of the same small group the ground was untended, covered with grass and bushes.

The first sign of life we would usually see as we slowly approached a hut by foot would be a chicken with a pugnacious little head, a scrawny body perched on long, bony legs, and all the appearance of a badly-made property hen—wood covered with some ruffled feathers. I am mentioning them in detail because later, during the many months we spent in the forest, we well learned to know these chickens as the only variation we could obtain, *when* we could get them, to our diet of tinned stuffs. And the experience proved that we were not wrong when, on first sight, we thought they were made of wood and feathers.

After these little brilliant specimens of domestic fauna, a tiny boy might cautiously appear from beneath a bush, peep at us a moment in amazed surprise and then run away in frightened silence with all the speed his thin, emaciated legs and his monstrous belly would allow. Sometimes a wretched woman, with a bestial face, would appear from nowhere, painfully bent under a load which looked three times heavier than she could possibly carry. And when she glimpsed us, she would drop her load to the ground and take to her heels with yelps of terror. At her shrieks, or otherwise, at our reiterated calls, a man would suspiciously poke out his head from the inside of the hut. A pathetic caricature of his son, a starved look in his hollow eyes, he

[*facing:* THE HIDEOUS CROCODILES,  
LYING FOR HOURS ON END IN THE SAND







would approach us only upon seeing the salt we offered, and then avidly grasping the white crystals retreat to the protection of his hut. And often many minutes of diplomatic approaches were necessary before we could get him to relax and talk to us.

Undernourishment, and often starvation, are what keeps these populations in such a state of abject misery. Yet the river contains fish for the taking. Yet the plains are filled with small and big game; the ground yields bananas, manioc, maize and potatoes in any quantity for the small exertion of dropping the seeds in the soil and letting them grow. And the Belgian authorities provide free seeds and shoots, and send agronomists to give any help or suggestions that might be needed.

But the Bandande prefer to have their wives slave to bring in wood and some eatable roots and plants, while they, themselves, lie in the dirty sultriness of their huts, willing, if necessary, to starve to death rather than do a single stroke of work.

The fact is that the slave traders from Uganda for centuries took away every man, woman and child that had some aspect of health and strength. The remnant, further decimated by starvation, by sleeping sickness and the cruelties of cannibal secret societies, would have disappeared if the Belgian Government, to such extreme degradation had not brought extreme remedies, deciding to excavate—it is the only word for it—through the thick mass of the Kibali-Ituri Forest the road from Lubero to Irumu, and huge clearings along it where they could build the fine villages I have mentioned. There, slowly,

[*facing:* ONE OF THE TRUCKS BEING PUSHED  
THROUGH SOFT GROUND

patiently, during the past five years the greater part of the Semliki population has been persuaded to move. There, tribes and clans are again formed under their hereditary chiefs ; and the healthy climate, the devotion of the Belgian medical service, the richest and best organised of all Africa ; and the abundant food supplied by the gardens and plantations which the territorial authority has initiated around every village, are working miracles. So much so, that having resumed again our trip north, each time we stopped at one of these villages we were simply startled at the difference between their inhabitants, who had left the Semliki only a few years before, and the pathetic population still remaining in that valley of suffering we had just visited.

Up to Lubero, hidden in plants and flowers, and although just on the equator, reminiscent of the Alps both for the mountain scenery and for the pure, bracing air ; then to the gold mines of Butembo, and north again, the road continues in an unending series of well-calculated spirals, climbing up and down dozens of mountains, running through cool valleys and over large, solid bridges, always safe, easy, and constructed in a *grand seigneur* style which is particularly admirable when the needs of the local traffic are so small that for days on end one does not meet a single vehicle.

And finally we were at Beni, the place of which I had thought so often since, five years previously, a friend of mine, a doctor, who had just returned from the Semliki, had said to me : " If you ever want to see Okapi and Bongo, go near Beni. Here it is," he had continued, making a quick sketch on a page of

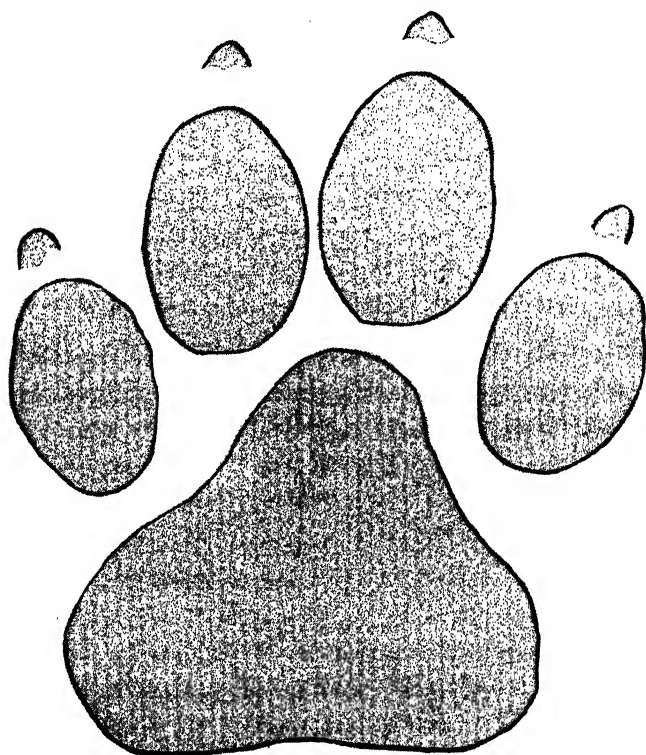
his notebook. "It is not even a post, just the house of the Administrateur and some other mud buildings on the shore of the river. But the Administrateur would be able to put you in touch with Moera, the best chief of the country and a great hunter himself. Here is his village. Tell him my native name, '*Muganga Murefu*' (the tall doctor) and that I want him to help you. You will have good, quick results."

All these years I had carefully kept the little sheet of paper, and an exact recollection of the doctor's words. But five years in Africa are many, so quickly things change. Beni had had plenty of time to leave the river and come to the new road, together with the populations it controlled. And it had taken on a much better appearance, four or five brick houses, shining red in the middle of well-kept gardens; a hospital, three stores kept by a Belgian, a Greek, and an Indian; and a huge square where we pitched our camp.

Moera had come to the road, too, with his village, and had broken with age, and the Administrator diplomatically told me that "he was not really the best chief" and that I would do much better with another, Kalumé, some kilometres farther north.

We met Moera on the road, his ugly face of an old monkey half hidden by a huge white helmet; two big silver medals jingling on his chest; an enormous Belgian flag preceding him in the hands of one of his policemen, and following him a band of counselors, witch doctors, chair and umbrella carriers, women, policemen, and even an ex-soldier with a battered bugle announcing with its ear-splitting

sounds the arrival of the big chief. His face, the cruel expression of his eyes, gave us a most unpleasant impression almost of disgust. But only



THE FOOTPRINT OF A FOREST LEOPARD

later we were able fully to understand how wise had been the advice of the Administrator and how right our instinctive feelings.

For from the second day, under the appearance of Arcadian calm and orderly, regular life that the fresh-from-the-bandbox atmosphere of Beni emanated,

we could detect a general tension ; and we learned the reason for the alertness shown by the few whites, the spasmodic terror which all the natives feebly tried to mask under their customary enigmatic, indifferent attitude.

Even in broad daylight, even to go to the post, the natives would not leave their huts except in groups, carefully avoiding the patches of *matete*, the high, thick grass, and keeping close together with the instinct of the herd in danger. For even in broad daylight and in the most frequented spots of the post, almost every day a lifeless body was found, although no one had heard a cry or the noise of a struggle.

Men or women, young or old, invariably lying in a pool of blood, the head and the upper part of the body horribly mutilated, the throat deeply gashed, and on the ground near them the tracks of a feline, a triangular pad and four oval, sharp-nailed toes. The leopards had taken a new victim ! The leopards, evidently, had become of an audacity and a persistency unbelievable, for as far as the memory of man reaches their killings had never amounted to such a scourge as this—forty-two in less than three months in Beni alone.

That it was the work of leopards in Beni as elsewhere had seemed certain in the beginning. So even the relatives of the victims themselves had emphatically declared, seconded by the few attacked persons whom a lucky intervention had saved from death. So had sustained expert doctors in various territories where such deaths repeatedly occurred. So it had been clearly proved by an inquest made with every possible care by magistrates and officials. But the

certainty had not lasted. Doubts had been born here and there. Some officials began to find in each instance a recurring of detail too marked to be accidental. Some doctors to be not so sure of their post-mortem examinations. Some enterprising magistrates to discover discrepancies in the dossiers of the inquest.

From suspicion, the Belgian authorities immediately passed to vigorous action. All the great machinery of justice, of the Territorial Administrators and agents was put into movement. Until one day the truth was brought to light and proved. Leopards were indeed the perpetrators of the crimes. But then as in the past, human leopards, Wahokohoko—or Anioto, as they are called in Bangala. In other words, the Leopard-Men.

Of legends on the feats of the Leopard-Men, and narratives strongly smelling of legend, I had heard and read many, the phenomena seeming to have been more or less diffused in every part of Central Africa as long as human life has existed there. But that they could operate so freely in this part of Congo to-day, that they could be found among these natives with whom we had daily contact, was a thing I could accept with difficulty until I came to have a clearer idea of the country and its inhabitants.

The fact is that the concentration of the populations along the road makes it possible for the authorities to proceed at the maximum speed with the moral as well as the physical regeneration of the natives. But, however conscientiously carried on, not in one year, nor in ten, can the entire mentality of the race be transformed, and the cruel superstitions and

- [*facing*: 1. GAZELLES BARELY INTERRUPT THEIR  
GRAZING TO STARE AT OUR CAR  
2. THREE "DAMALISCUS" ON THE PLAINS  
OF THE PARC NATIONAL ALBERT







cannibalistic tastes completely destroyed. Nor can the great natural hiding-place of the criminals—the dense equatorial forest that encloses each small oasis of civilisation—be controlled. Particularly, since each administrator, with small means and smaller personnel, has charge of a territory sometimes as large as Belgium itself, sometimes four or five times larger.

These, I believe, are the reasons that the Leopard-Men have been able to function even to-day almost under the noses of the authorities. However, before the decided, energetic action of the Belgians, the wall of mystery behind which the Aniotos have hidden for such a long time, began to crumble here and there. The general conspiracy of silence, caused by fear of revenge, which had hitherto been the greatest safety of the malefactors, gradually broke down. Before the evidence that the inquisitors had collected and pieced together with the patience of Carthusian monks, the weakest criminals began to confess, the highest chiefs and instigators to be mentioned, the whole organisation to be uncovered.

Already in those days of April, 1934, in the prison and at the hospital we saw Aniotos, who had confessed to have participated in several crimes; and a witch-doctor, an old, shrivelled, insignificant little man, except for a pair of red eyes like those of a wild beast, who had not yet spoken a single word, but who had been accused on circumstantial evidence of having instigated, ordered and directed from his distant, innocent-appearing hut, at least twenty-three murders.

Again, in this last year and a half, things have greatly changed. Since several months now, the

Wahokohoko<sup>1</sup> have not dared to commit a new crime. Many of the worst offenders have been hanged or have received life sentences. Moera, who for so long had been regarded as a faithful chief, one of the best, and the one who was permitted to shake hands with King and Princes and Ministers visiting the country, is now in jail, and will remain there for many years to come, as one of the heads of the Leopard-Men sect.

To-day productive peace and happy calm surround the spick-and-span Beni, now grown in importance, with many new houses, an all-season swimming pool and two good tennis courts, and with a completely new white population, tripled in number. For the few administrators, agents and doctors we met on our arrival are already gone, back to Belgium on leave, or to other destinations.

One of them to a particularly tragic journey's end. This was a young Luxemburgois, full of extraordinary ardour and enthusiasm for his job, who had been the first to welcome us upon our arrival in Beni and one of the first to start the courageous campaign against the Anieto—the Agent Territorial Offenheim, who was taken from his post, just a few months ago, by a lightning, un-understandable death, which all the natives, without hesitation, gravely attribute to the secret society's revengeful witchcraft.

<sup>1</sup> In Kindande language, Muhokohoko is the singular, Wahokohoko the plural for Leopard-Man, while Kihokohoko is the name of the sect. Its members are in the Beni Territory Bandande, usually from the Batangi, Bahera, Bashu and Baswaga clans.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### SULTANI KALUME

WE were just sitting down to our first dinner in Beni when we noticed Mr. Offenheim, the Agent Territorial, approaching our camp.

"Sorry to trouble you," he said as he entered the dining-tent, "but that imbecile of a boy of mine absolutely refused to bring you a note I had written for you."

I remembered the boy, moving deftly about his household duties in Mr. Offenheim's bungalow, just on the other side of the square clearing in which we were camped. I had noticed him because of his costume, a shirt of violent blue silk and a pair of white trousers big enough for two. Idly I had registered him as a mission-trained boy, too "civilised" for my own personal taste. And now his master was chuckling as he told us that the boy had stubbornly refused to come to our camp after dark because we were "*Bwana*<sup>1</sup> come to eat boys."

<sup>1</sup> In the version of Kiswahili used in the Ituri, the plural of a word is formed by adding a prefix or by changing the first syllable. As I think this would be most confusing to the reader unfamiliar with the language, I am employing in this book the singular form only, or the plural form only, of a particular word, leaving the context of the sentence to make the meaning clear. This, moreover, is what the natives do for the same reason, when they either do not know the language well themselves, or when they speak to the white man, who very seldom (except for missionaries and officials) has a deep knowledge of Kiswahili.

For example, the word for "knife" is *kisu*, plural *visu*; but usually,

This not very flattering appreciation of our appetites and customs was, of course, only a product and a thermometer of the nervous tension of those days, and of the explosion of superstitious terror provoked among the natives by the crimes of the Leopard-Men.

"At midnight," Mr. Offenheim continued, "I am going to sound a drill-alarm. The soldiers, too, need to be kept well in hand with all this ghastly business going on. I want to let you know, so you won't be startled if you're roused by the racket in the middle of the night."

Eric Dugdale, always keen for any prospect of adventure, lost no time in making us a proposal as soon as Mr. Offenheim had left us.

"If we're going to be waked up at midnight," he said, "why go to bed now? Why don't we go down the road for twenty or thirty kilometres? Who knows how many animals we will see at this hour with the headlights on!"

The road from Beni to Irumu had been well publicised for us. Each of us had been repeatedly warned since our arrival in Beni that it was not safe to go so much as thirty paces down that road unarmed at night because of the big leopards, real ones this time, and elephants that frequented it.

We were all tired from a long day of driving, but I could not resist the excitement already beginning to smoulder in Eric's blue eyes. So accordingly we

in speaking to a white, a native will say "one *visu*," or "two *kisu*," according with the word which the white man knows. Of course, either expression is incorrect, but both are equally understandable.

I have taken as authority for the spelling of words of the Kiswahili variant spoken in N.E. Congo, a grammar printed in Brussels and officially used by the native schools of the Kibali-Ituri District, and by many others.

set out, armed to the teeth, each of my three companions clutching a rifle and leaning out of the car with very sleuth-like attitudes to scan the black walls of the forest which lined the road, while I, at the wheel, kept as sharp a look-out as I could.

Once indeed we saw a pair of burning eyes caught in the glare of the movable spot-light I continually flashed along the sides of the road. Eric, lighting his headlamp, heroically climbed out of the car, but all he had for his pains was the insulting flip of the tail of some small carnivora as it disappeared into the forest. Beyond that, nothing. Nothing but the black walls of the forest, mysterious, sinister, silent, undimmed for us as yet by the familiarity of daily contact.

After forty kilometres, we turned back and retraced our way with waning hopes. But not so much as a rabbit darted across the road. Not one elephant had the decency to trumpet, even at a safe distance. Sheepishly, we turned at last into the square of Beni, to find the little post quietly sleeping. We had missed even the drill-alarm !

Like sleepy owls, we stood for a few moments at the doors of our respective tents, huddled together in the dreary light of a hurricane lamp, and voted the Beni-Irumu road a "wash-out."

The following day the Administrator kindly accompanied me to the village of the chief, Kalumé, whose territory lay just beyond that of Moera and where I had almost decided to remain for our work. And that road which in darkness had looked so wild and full of lurking dangers, now in the sunny day appeared such a beautiful parkway that I grinned to myself at the memory of our previous night's exploit, and

at the rifle I had still thought it necessary to stow away in the back of the car that morning.

On reaching kilometre 106—the numeration starts from Irumu—I saw a big village just at the point where we had turned our car the night before, although then we had not been able to see a single hut. It seemed a good omen for the right choice of locality, and a still better one I found in the appearance of Kalumé when he hastened toward us. He was draped from the chest down in a length of coloured cloth, and the dignity of his carriage, the muscular development of his arms and shoulders, the frank and intelligent expression of his well-modelled face and alert, expressive eyes, marked him at once for an imported chief belonging to a higher race than the Bandande<sup>1</sup>, and gave me good hope for the help we would require of him in our future researches.

He was, I learned at once, from the M'bahio, a clan of the Mambuba ; and as for our work, having listened respectfully to the Administrator, he answered readily that his territory was full of Okapi and Bongo, and that he was prepared to do his very best to help us.

He went even further, declaring that all that was necessary to be done would be attended to immediately, and that with his help and the guidance of the pygmies we would be able to capture the two young Okapi we wanted very, very soon.

"*Kesho*," he concluded in a burst of enthusiasm.

Now "*kesho*," I had always thought, meant "to-morrow," and the Administrator confirmed to me the meaning of the word as we left, but with the smile of a man who knows his natives.

<sup>1</sup> The name officially adopted for the Bandande is "Wanande."



As for us, when we discussed it later in camp, the assurance of the Chief left us with mingled feelings.

On the one hand, his confidence was certainly encouraging, as a third omen, and the best of all, for the success of our enterprise which we, as everyone else, had always believed would be exceedingly difficult.

On the other hand, the excessive facility with which our work could be accomplished took away most of its interest and flavour.

But we were wrong on both counts, as the "tomorrow" of Kalumé showed us afterwards, and as I will relate in the following chapters.

One thing that had struck me during our conversation with the Chief had been the pronunciation Kalumé had given to the name of our principal quest. It was the first time I had heard the word spoken by a native, and it was distinctly pronounced "Okwapi" (o-kwà-pi). Later, during the various trips we made in the Ituri, the Epulu, the Uele, we observed that the Bambuba, one of Congo's most ancient populations; the Walese; the Babira, and all the other tribes of the great Bakumu family, used the word in exactly the same way. This is true also for the Babua and the Bakere of the Uele, and the Batangi, the Wanisanza, the Bashu, the Bamate, the Basuaga and all the other Bandande, although some of them have also alternative names for the animal, as *m'boodi*, or *m'kengi meusi*, or *n'duombi*. And as these are the only peoples in whose territories the *ocapia johnstoni* lives, and as for this animal there was retained in current use what was believed to be its native name, it seems to me that it should be conserved in its original, correct pronunciation

“Okwapi.” And so I am preparing to write it from now on, as we all became so accustomed to pronouncing it in this way since that first meeting with Kalumé<sup>1</sup>.

It is not at all surprising that the name of the Okwapi has been incorrectly introduced into general usage, as its discovery has been a very peculiar one. I had occasion of receiving some first-hand information about it during our trip from London to Mombasa, as one of our companions on board of the *Llandaff Castle* was Archdeacon Lloyd, whom many may know as one of the oldest and most respected of Congo pioneers.

As on this occasion, almost forty years before Mr. Lloyd had been returning from London to his mission at Boga, on the Congo side of the Semliki River ; and as now, so then, he enjoyed talking with travelling companions who were particularly fond of Africa and interested in African things. One of these happened to be Sir Harry Johnston, already well known at that time for his research work in East Africa, and later to become famous through his great work on the Uganda Protectorate.

An earnest naturalist, Sir Harry asked for information on the fauna of the country in which the missionary had probably been the first white man to live. And thus he learned that the mythical animal resembling the zebra and the giraffe of which Colonel Marchand and H. M. Stanley had made vague mention, as of a forest donkey or “a large striped antelope,” actually existed ; and that Mr. Lloyd

<sup>1</sup> Here again it is important to notice the difference between singular and plural. To be correct, one Okwapi is *Kwapi* ; *Okwapi* being the plural. We picked up the latter as nearer to the current name given by the white man to the *ocapia johnstoni*.

had himself once seen a live specimen, and several times strips of skins in the hands of chiefs and witch-doctors who treasured them, believing they possessed remarkable magical powers.

On receipt of this information, Sir Harry Johnston immediately prepared an expedition to the edge of the forest where in the words of the natives he found complete confirmation of Mr. Lloyd's statement. However, although he tried every possible method, the scientist did not succeed either in seeing or in bagging a single Okwapi. As far as I know, he was obliged to content himself with collecting from the natives as many bones and pieces of skins as he could find, and on the basis of these he announced in 1900 the discovery of a new animal, of which he knew so little as to name it *equus johnstoni*, making the same mistake of Stuhlmann, who, as far back as 1891, saw an Okwapi belt and mistook it for zebra skin.

Just in these last days I have noticed that the *Illustrated London News*<sup>1</sup>, always so well-informed and careful in its statements, attributes the discovery of the Okwapi to Major Powell-Cotton, in the same year of 1900, without mentioning at all, contrary to what has always been done in previous issues dealing with the animal, the name of Sir H. H. Johnston.

Cut off, as we are here, from every possibility of checking data, I cannot say if this new claim invalidates Sir Harry's right to the discovery. Be that as it may, later in 1900 he received from an official in the Congo service and from the lieutenant commanding the Ituri, two Okwapi skulls and an incomplete skin ; was able to correct his gaffe, re-naming the

<sup>1</sup> Issue of July 27th, 1935, page 167.

animal *ocapia johnstoni*; and to make its pictorial reconstruction, naturally very approximate, which appears in the opening chapter of his book on Uganda.

Since that time more than a third of a century has passed. The Belgians have cut many good roads through the forest—the one I mentioned from Rutchuru to Beni and Irumu, and its continuation up to the Sudan borders; others connecting the distant Stanleyville with Irumu through the Epulu and the Ituri, and with Aba through the Uele, and transversal roads to Buta and Wamba. Ten thousand kilometres of highways, and the many natives who have come to live near the roads, with the clans of pygmies attached to every native tribe in a sort of voluntary slavery, have gradually put the forest within reach of expeditions, travellers and scientists, who, more and more, have made the most of the opportunity in order to try to pierce here and there the great green wall which borders roads and villages.

But the Okwapi has succeeded in remaining aloof and almost completely immured in a mystery, which has been accentuated rather than revealed by the animal's infrequent appearances before the eyes of the world.

Not until several years after the Okwapi's discovery was the first specimen caught. The specimen, which was killed in the taking, was found in a pit by the Alexander-Golding Expedition in 1906. Its skin and bones were brought to England and some photographs, the first ever taken of a complete animal, published the following year by Powell-Cotton and Lieutenant Boyd Alexander. These two pioneers were also the first ever to eat Okwapi meat, and Alexander wrote that "it was very tender and tasted

like beef<sup>1</sup>," the least complimentary comment one could make, it seems to me, for I personally never tasted either in Africa or elsewhere meat as good and delicate as the Okwapi fillet that some pygmies offered me one day.

Later, in 1907, the *Illustrated London News* published the first photograph of a live Okwapi, taken by the Italian, Mr. Ribotti, I believe. This was a baby, one month old, that the pygmies had brought to a post on the Ituri River, and which shortly thereafter died.

Again some years passed, during which the Okwapi seemed to be forgotten. Then, in 1912, 1913 and 1914, A. E. Reid, Dr. Cuthbert Christy, Commandant Hedemark, and a white elephant-hunter, succeeded in bagging one or two specimens each, all found either near Mawambi or in the territory of old Moera. The Okwapi, however, was still such an incognita that, if I remember correctly, Doctor Christy reports that the first time Mr. Reid killed one he thought he had got a buffalo with extraordinarily short horns. And just by an odd coincidence, those horns were for a long time, and probably still are, the record for the Okwapi, being five inches in length.

The outbreak of the World War threw the Okwapi once more into oblivion ; but a very young one, only two or three days old, was just at that time brought by the pygmies to Bambili, where the wife of an official patiently raised it until in 1919 it was sent to the Antwerp Zoo, the very first specimen ever to leave Africa. It lived only two months after its arrival in Belgium. Then again nine years had to pass before another specimen, a female, could be

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, "From the Niger to the Nile," by Boyd Alexander, 1907.

sent to Antwerp, this time by Brother Joseph Hutsebaut, of the Buta Mission. Since then, Brother Hutsebaut has become intensely interested in the small zoo of rare animals which he maintains at the mission, and has succeeded in sending a male Okwapi to Antwerp in 1932, and, in these last months, two other males, "Congo," presented by the King of the Belgians to the Prince of Wales; the other replacing the male sent in 1932, which had meanwhile died.<sup>1</sup>

This, however, is the end of 1935; and in any case all the Okwapi I have mentioned were captured by pygmies, either by hand when very young, or in pits, and brought to white people, who raised them. But then, in April, 1934, when I first met Sultani Kalumé, the Antwerp female was the only Okwapi in captivity; and, besides, I wanted to capture Okwapi myself in order to be able to observe from the very first moments their reactions to captivity and so to complete the work I was planning to do in the forest. That is, to study thoroughly the life of these animals in the complete freedom of their own infinite kingdom.

The difficulties of this programme, and the more than Einsteinian relativity of Kalumé's "*kesho*," began to appear to me in all their true proportions from the morning of April 13th, when we put up our camp at Km. 106 for "one or two days," again to quote the Sultani's words, just the time necessary for him to get us the porters we required.

The plan was that the morning after, or at the very latest the morning after that, we would start

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written, the three Okwapi referred to above have all died; so that at the present time there is not a single Okwapi in captivity in any zoo in the world.

for the interior of the forest, straight west from the road toward the Sambuku River, where Okwapi went to drink and bathe every day by the scores. To give a fillip to our already heated enthusiasm, this same river was one of those mysterious frontiers beyond which lay a *tabu* zone no native or pygmy would dream of entering, although it was only six hours' march from the road ; and we, too, were warned that on no account must we cross the fateful boundary.

All the *kapita*<sup>1</sup> of Kalumé and his brothers, and several *mfundi*<sup>2</sup> and many other influential personages who had gathered as so many flies around the honey-pot of such excitement, nodded their heads in confirmation until their necks must have ached. It was so, no doubt about that. And it was probable, very probable, that in the pits excavated on this side of the river we would find some Okwapi just ready and waiting to be taken away. And it was simply mathematical that on the following morning the pygmies and the porters would be there, prepared to start, with food for a week, and everything.

How many porters were needed ?

A *kapita* gave a circular glance at the camp. "One hundred," he estimated.

"*Hapana !*"<sup>3</sup> said another with emphasis, "two hundred, at least."

Smiling in a highly superior fashion, a brother of the Sultani pointed to a great mound of cases. "Not a man less than three hundred," he gauged.

"Let's make it four hundred," concluded Kalumé, "so we will be safe."

This was exactly my estimate. But where could we hope to find so many men ?

<sup>1</sup> Sub-chiefs.   <sup>2</sup> Craftsmen.   <sup>3</sup> No !

Yet everybody nodded more violently than ever. And four hundred men was the figure decided upon, amidst the admiration of my three companions, who had never thought that porters could be raised so quickly and in such numbers. I had even less faith in such a happy event, but being born an optimist, at dawn I was up waiting for the forecasted cohorts.

An hour passed, and Kalumé came to say that all his *kapita*, policemen, *mfundi*, brothers, etc., were at work gathering the men. Another hour slipped by, and nobody came into view. Another hour, and a little man, so small and thin and pathetic that I would not have dared to load him with my mackintosh, presented himself very martially, with a great military salute and an impressive "mer-e-ci," which he thought the smartest possible greeting, and which from that day became his name.

With midday and a scorching sun a mournful group of six miserable specimens arrived at funeral pace, remained for a minute hypnotised before the number and size of the cases to be transported, and darted away with the speed of so many bullets.

And for that day, that was all. Except for a little talk in which I tried to express to Kalumé in choice terms my most intimate feelings.

The next day was Sunday, and a deep religious consciousness spread epidemically over all the country.

Then it was Monday, and a deputation came to explain that the five hundred porters were ready, but had to go first to their gardens to prepare their food for a week's *safari*.

Tuesday, and the six hundred porters were absolutely in marching order, but what should they come for when the pygmies had not yet arrived?



On Wednesday the porters had become seven hundred, and the days of march to reach the river had increased to two, apparently, and a goat had been sent to the pygmies to persuade them to come immediately.

By Friday, the porters, ready and impatient to start, were a thousand at least, and a dozen pygmies were actually squatted on the ground around a little fire behind my tent, impassively watching events. But the days of march, really, with those heavy cases, would be at least three, and the day after to-morrow being the sacred Sunday, God's day, well, a conclusion was not so difficult to draw.

So, in despair—for it may be imagined that during the whole week I had done all that I could—I cordially invited Kalumé for a little ride in my box-body and brought him to Beni to have a talk with the Administrator. On arriving there, Kalumé had his justification ready. All the delay was due to the fact that the Okwapi, which in the past had almost covered the shores of the Sambuku, had now disappeared completely and gone not only *kupoli*, which means far away, but *kupooooli*, every "o" of which corresponded to so many more dozens of hours of march.

This was only the first instance of the kind of absolutely contradictory information—given apparently in the best of faith by the same individual during a few days interval—against which I was to beat my head for all the following months, especially every time that forest and animals were concerned. And as nothing annoys me so much as when a native tries to make a fool out of me, from that first instance I chose the only possible way: to make an average between the two exaggerations, and go ahead.

Before my decision of going, anyway, to the Sambuku, no excuse remained to Kalumé, and he assured the Administrator that Monday morning, without failure, the hundred porters he could supply would be ready at my camp. Or at least fifty, who every other day could make a trip back to the road to take new loads, as the Sambuku was, once more, only six hours distant.

These various points having been straightened out, another was clarified by our return trip—the road which had proved such a disillusion on our first nocturnal journey along it now showed itself in the colours in which it had been painted for us by the residents of Beni.

On leaving the post, I noted that my headlights were out of order, only the spot-light still giving some feeble light. So, holding it with one hand to keep its faint rays in the middle of the twisting road, and driving with the other, I started into the black night.

Kalumé, who was riding in a car for the first time in his life, was anxiously peering ahead, as he nervously grasped my unloaded shotgun.

"*Mtembo ! Mtembo !*" he suddenly shouted in my ear after we had gone for some kilometres.

My eyes had been so riveted on that spot of light in the middle of the road that I had been unable to see anything else. Now, looking up, I saw ahead of us a line of big, soft, greyish bodies barring our way, and I immediately brought the car to a cautious stop. Raising the lamp a little, I saw that three big bulls had occupied the road, facing us, as if to protect the passage of the long line of cows and calves slowly crossing behind them. And that,

probably annoyed at the light, they were waving their ears and trunks in the air in a manner none too friendly.

"Shoot, *Bwana!* Shoot," Kalumé hissed, and tried to press the empty shot-gun upon me.

He was silenced on the spot, more than by my word by a chorus of irritated trumpeting, and I shut off the light.

Appreciating my gesture, the elephants must have continued quietly on their way, for a few minutes later I switched on the lamp and found the road completely free.

Pulling Kalumé's leg a little for his fright, I continued, very slowly and carefully because the light was growing dimmer and dimmer and the road quite slippery.

But not a quarter of a mile farther I was to have a fright myself, when my hand, holding the spot-light, rubbed against some rough surface.

"I'm off the road," I thought instantly—no joke in this country—for I supposed that my hand had grazed the bark of a tree.

I was looking straight ahead, but by instinct the tail of my eye gave a quick glance to the right. And there, protruding into my line of vision, were two long, white arches, parallel with me. My tree had been an elephant, trotting along in the lateral ditch beside the road, where the shadow was even more dense from the foliage of the trees, and I had no doubt rubbed my hand against one of his huge ears.

"*Mtembo!*" Kalumé shivered this time. "Run, *Bwana!*"

But with that light and road I couldn't run very

fast, not even when Kalumé excitedly told me that the pachyderm was following us—charging, he said.

Turning my head, I could see something white, with a big grey spot behind, at about a dozen yards distance, in the middle of the road, now.

But to end in a ditch at night and with that elephant so near and so interested in us, would have been worse than the push he could give us from behind, if ever he would bring himself to risk the points of his tusks against that strange thing, smelling of man but running away so noisily, which I was trying to keep in the middle of the road at the best possible speed.

Finally, disgusted with the whole show, the elephant decided to leave us alone and disappeared into the darkness ; and the episode later evolved into a deed of mighty prowess on our part, through the words of Kalumé, who soon forgot that even when we reached our camp that night he was still crouched, trembling, on the seat, facing backward, his eyes glued on the tiny strip of road visible behind us.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### THE FIRST SAFARI

MONDAY came, and a jolly Monday, too, with a scorching sun that at seven o'clock knew already how to cover our foreheads with perspiration ; with an exceptionally dark blue sky, and the rare sight of Ruwenzori's head suspended in mid-air, far away, as if floating at the horizon over the foam of white clouds covering the black sea of the forest.

And with the pygmies in great uniform ; short, heavy spears in their hands, their bark-cloth garment reduced to the size of a postage stamp, all the rest of the body covered with the chalk white, ash grey and ochre red of their hunting paintings, the features of the face disappearing under the hieroglyphics of the black juice of the *ivembi* (a fruit that the Okwapi loves), blue and red feathers of *ndegi* and *sebbi* crowning their thick-boned heads.

And with the mythical porters, too. Not a thousand of them, nor the original four hundred. Not even the hundred or the fifty promised to the Administrator. Just thirty, and among them belligerent little Mer-e-ci and a dozen even poorer human specimens. And all of them so loaded with immense bunches of bananas as to leave deep doubts of who would carry our baggage after all.

And with a perfect pandemonium in our camp.

Porters to be convinced that the bananas must

pass to the strong backs of their wives. Porters to be loaded with the one little tent and the few bales and cases we could take for that day for my wife and myself, and to be argued and charmed into putting them on their heads. Porters to be recalled, because they had snatched an empty tin or a little package and run away in the hope of escaping scot-free.

Salutations to Eric, going to find and finish the big tusker he had wounded and lost the day before.

The cook, from Nairobi, arriving at the last minute with a huge case without which, he dramatically declares, we can never eat. Kalumé picking up just that moment to express his heart's desire for a cigarette. The tent boy, from Uganda, panting that a porter must have run on ahead with my rifle.

Last recommendations to Dennis, remaining at the road in charge of all the material, to send it to us as soon as he can get porters.

The kitchen *toto*, from the plains of Rwanda, imploring me for a porter to carry a huge bundle of wood, because he is afraid in the forest there will not be any!

A shout from my wife that she has been almost overturned by the tipoye-carriers, and the whole tipoye to be untied and re-tied to lower its centre of gravity.

A policeman who comes to denounce Mer-e-ci who has thoughtfully put down his load in the middle of the road and run away. Makulu-kulu, the Mambuti chief, who makes an elaborate speech, characteristically, to ask if he may add to his most beloved possessions, an empty bean-tin he has found behind the kitchen. The three chickens we have

succeeded in buying, after much bargaining, escaping from the head of the wife of the cook, landing noisily in the middle of a tin of water, fighting to get away, each one in a different direction, with water and feathers and boys flying everywhere. The ten porters, out of the thirty, whom I had sent ahead hours before to open a passage with a machete each, peacefully appearing from behind a hut where they have just finished breakfast and innocently asking if now they can begin work.

Finally everyone has gone, and I can start, too. Two kilometres on the road north, a small clearing on the left, and almost invisible in the forest wall surrounding the clearing the narrow path that elephants made and pygmies sometimes used. Some porters whom I briskly encourage, the tipoye which cost me so much labour already abandoned in the impossible entanglement, and my wife already resigned to make all the march by foot, and whom I leave under the gallant protection of the proud cook, holding with elaborate precaution her rifle.

Then the ten machete carriers, cutting energetically left and right a vegetation which seems to grow up again instantly, so narrow the path remains after their passage.

To run, in the forest, is a disaster. Exhausted, in a bath of perspiration, my face so hot that it must be purple, or at least the brightest of reds, I reach the last pygmy, a trotting little being, slipping, more than walking, between, through, under trees and branches and bushes and thorns, as silent and unconcerned as a shadow.

I, instead, I am a living scandal, and in spite of all my care, a panting noise-maker, but I push

ahead because I want to be with Makulu-kulu and lose nothing of that first march and the animals we may encounter. "Bang," answers something hard bouncing off my helmet. "Crrrack," cry the hooked thorns which have grasped my clothes, rending them with joy, parting from them with reluctance. "Crick-crick ! Plof-plof !" comment my heavy boots at every step, breaking dry sticks, or sinking deep into gluey mud.

One after another, however, I have left behind me all the pygmies. I have reached their chief, finding him, the monkey, quiet and happy and fresh, with his respiration perfectly regular, his paintings intact, as if he had just come out of his hut.

In such circumstances, if you need two minutes of rest to put in order your heart and lungs, to dry your face, to rearrange in some way the soft, pulpy, sort of melancholy omelette into which bumps and perspiration and showers from wet foliage have reduced your helmet of compressed banana leaves, and if you do not want to lose face before the natives in asking for a respite, there is a magic word to be used—" *tumbako*."

This I pronounced, instantly obtaining the effect of all the pygmies crowding around and twelve tiny hands eagerly extended toward me. It cost me as many cigarettes, but they were smoked on the spot in ecstatic immobility, giving me sufficient time to reacquire my equilibrium and enough aplomb to let out, at the end of their consumption a nonchalant, if not impatient, "*Basi ! Safari !*" which might be translated as "Well, now, let's go, boys !"

Straddling over huge fallen trunks ; wading tempting little crystalline streams ; brushing aside branches ;



turning around gigantic trees ; splashing heavily through *potopot*<sup>1</sup> ; crossing little clearings and swamps ; climbing up and down hills invisible in the vegetation, on and on we went, one hour after another.

The forest seemed deserted, deprived of any life. At first it was as if under this great green dome only those few pygmies and I were moving, and only I was making some noise—plenty of noise. Then I grew accustomed to that kind of vegetation, so different, for instance, from the Tchibinda Forest, and, marching more silently, I began to perceive branches crackling in the distance, leaves brushed somewhere ahead, splashes in the water near at hand.

These sounds became more frequent and distinct the farther we proceeded. Once a strong crash, quite close, made me raise my rifle, immobilised Makulu-kulu on the spot. "*Mtembo*," he whispered to me, more with his lips than with sound. "*Mboko*" (buffalo), he said another time, when I could not see a thing, not even a leaf, move, but only heard a slight rustling fading away from us.

The path had borne many footprints the whole time ; small ones of gazelles and hogs, big ones of buffaloes and once of a huge leopard, deep, enormous ones of elephants, filled with the muddy water that the mighty weight had squeezed out of the ground.

About four hours after we had left the road I noticed a mark made by a foot I did not know, the cloven hoof of the *giraffidæ*, but with hooked points.

"Okwapi," said Makulu-kulu. And with some of the eloquent grimaces of his face, some of those intensely dramatic gestures of his little hands, which had earned for him the name of Sarah Bernhardt, he

<sup>1</sup> Any thick, adhesive substance ; in this case, very thick mud.

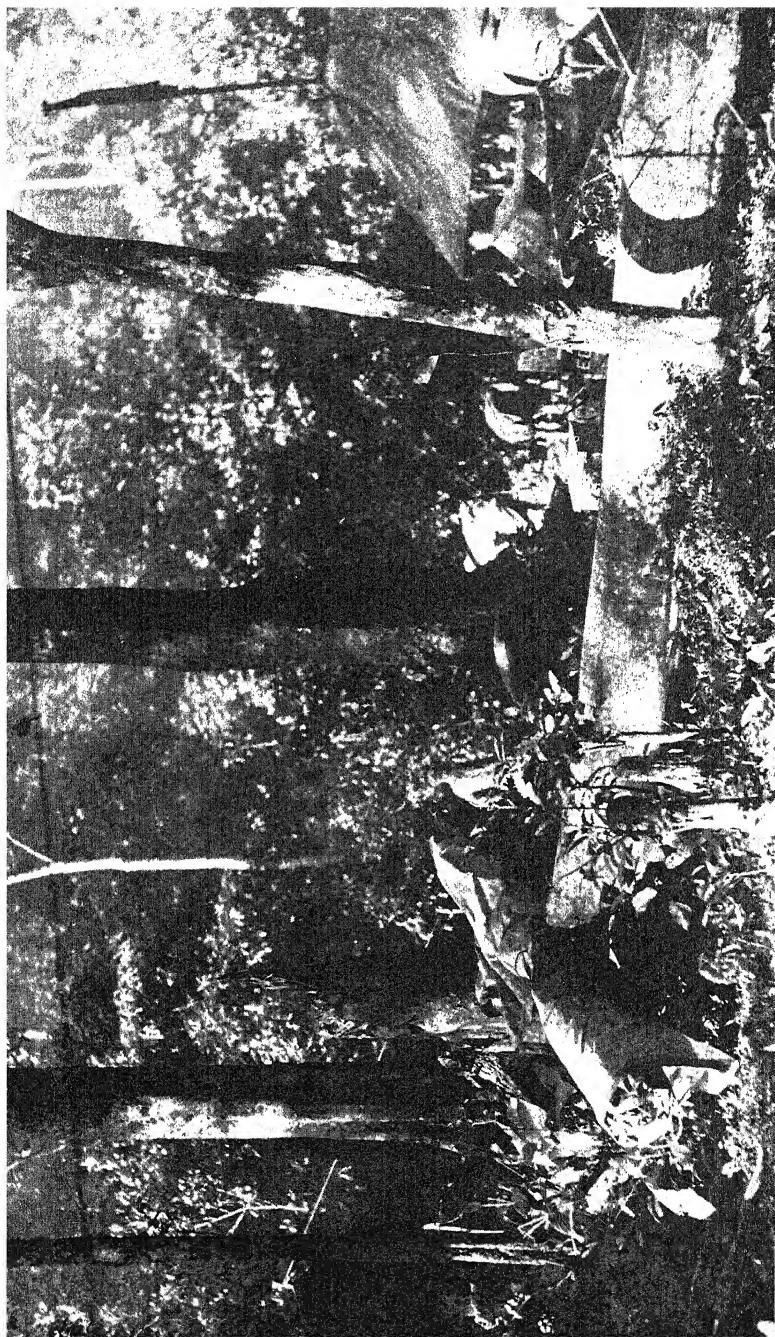
silently explained that it was a male, a big male, following our same path ahead of us to go to bathe in a little river, where we would probably find him lying down in the water if we advanced very silently. All this said as clearly as in a long speech (supposing that a long speech in his guttural, clicking language would have been understandable to me).

Was I to see so soon my first Okwapi? I must confess I was thrilled to death. For some time I almost succeeded in walking as silently as a Mambuti. Then I was startled by a crash, only ten or twelve yards ahead. I knew that a big animal was running away and, following Makulu-kulu in his quick dash forward, I reached the stream where it had been bathing, just as the little Sultani had said, the disturbed sand of the bed and track of dripping water proving it beyond doubt.

If Kalumé had not remained behind he would have had to invent pretty quickly some new excuses, for from that stream on, only along the path or crossing it, I counted the footprints left by five other Okwapi.

It would have been even more difficult for him to have explained how he had hoped to find some new animals already trapped in the *zemu*, pits, near the Sambuku. When we arrived there we found the *zemu* all right, but evidently they had not been used or cared for for several years, as the pygmies willingly confirmed. And instead of being kept dry inside, and with their mouths so carefully covered with sticks and leaves as to be actually indistinguishable from the surrounding ground—conditions *sine qua non* to deceive so sharp an eye as the Okwapi's—they were reduced to irregularly rectangular holes, all apparently filled with mud. And when, with a stick, I

[facing: "M'TEMBO" CAMP, BORN FROM A PYGMY  
FIRE AND AN ELEPHANT SKULL





tried to fathom their depth, instead of the eleven or twelve feet necessary to prevent the escape of an animal fallen into the pit, I found that earth crumbled down from the sides had filled them up to a depth of a few feet, and that the frogs which, at my manœuvres, jumped out in a whole squadron, were the only animals ever to be found in these abandoned traps.

However, there I was, at the Sambuku, in a country evidently rich in Okwapi, and so little disturbed that on this side of the river we had never found a human path, but had had to follow the entire time passages opened by animals.

As for the other side, the Mambuti assured me that they had never been and never would go, nor wanted me to go either, because I was a good *Bwana*, with plenty of cigarettes, salt and other fine things, and therefore they did not want me, nor my *mwana muke* (wife) either, to die in the clutches of monsters and evil spirits.

But everything is relative, even in the forest. And when they saw the "good *Bwana*," with his powerful rifle and no less powerful cigarettes, on the other shore inviting them to go with him, just for another little bit, just to find a place to camp, where all the Mambuti would get a very good tip, the little men discussed the situation animatedly. Then, still doubtfully scratching their potato-noses, one by one they crossed the water, accepted with a moderate enthusiasm my cigaretted encouragement and fearfully looking around went ahead for another five minutes.

Then, arriving at a small clearing of perhaps fifty yards of circumference, slightly elevated over a meander of the same river, they suddenly decided

[*facing*: I HAD TO LEARN TO SLIP SILENTLY  
THROUGH THE VEGETATION LIKE THE PYGMIES

that it was a delightful place for a camp, and that, anyway, we had fooled quite enough with monsters and spirits. So they planted their spears in the ground and determinedly began to make a fire, kindling it, nobody knows how, with those wet bits of wood and bark and the burning coals they had carried with them the whole way.

It was evident that for that day at least there was nothing else to be said or done. And as, altogether, it was as good a place as I was likely to find in that vicinity, I thought it best to put there our first camp in the forest. So I went near the fire and sat down on something greyish that showed amid the grass and that I had taken for a stone or a dried piece of trunk.

But under the impact of my tired body the thing moved. At the great joy of the pygmies, I discovered that my seat was the skull of a pygmy elephant which had evidently died there several years ago ; and, listening to the animated comments of the Mambuti, I learned that it had belonged to an elephant that Makulu-kulu's father had hunted a long time ago, and that had come to die of its wounds on that side of the water, as if knowing that the hunters would never dare to pursue it into the *tabu* zone, as, in fact, they never did.

But had the spirit of the dead pachyderm been pacified ? And how would the spirit of Makulu-kulu's father feel about the whole matter ? These two questions suddenly began to worry the pygmies, to bring their left hands to scratch their noses, their right hands to take up their spears from the ground. Was I to be left there alone, or to be forced to return because of some silly terrors of their own ?

"Listen," I said to Makulu-kulu, "Muungu (the great god) brought me to sit down on this skull because the spirit of your father wants me to stay here, and you with me, to smoke plenty of good cigarettes, to eat plenty of good salt. So let's stay here, and I will call this *Mtembo* Camp, and all the spirits will be pleased."

I don't know how pleased the spirits were, but a solution so simply arranging spiritual scruples and material desires certainly pleased the Mambuti.

"*Basi*," concluded Sarah Bernhardt, "*iko muzuri*," and nonchalantly took from my hand the bribe of the entire package of cigarettes I had been waving before his eyes during my entire speech.

And *Mtembo* Camp it remained, far longer than for that first day.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### WANDERING WITH "LITTLE BUTTERFLY"

*Mtembo* Camp, born from that pygmy fire, was established at once with the smallest of our tents, and almost destroyed that same night by a herd of elephants going to drink in the river. The following morning found the tent still up, although with several ropes broken, and my wife and I still down, peacefully asleep, in spite of some black and blue marks and plenty of pains in the bones. From then on, for three weeks, the tribes of black, red, brown, grey and yellow monkeys which had undertaken a more or less permanent watch from the tops of the surrounding trees were granted a spectacle of choice variety, if one could judge from their unceasing hysterical chatter.

Every day natives worked at clearing new space ; others arrived loaded with material. Our boys pitched additional tents or built primitive shelters in which to store all our cases. Long *safari* of women, bent under the mounds of bananas, bags of salt, baskets of beans and bunga<sup>1</sup> that Eric and Dennis brought continuously by the truckloads from Irumu, Lubero and even from the Gitwa Adventist Mission, accumulated in other huts, providing a sufficient temptation for all the avid monkeys of the forest and all the half-starving men of Kalumé's.

<sup>1</sup> Flour made from dried bananas.



These men, the first days so unfamiliar with the white as to run away into the forest as soon as they were called, began to know and like us, and especially to appreciate the abundance of food and of *matabisha*<sup>1</sup> that they could obtain from us through not too much work. And every day some shy group would come to enroll for permanent work, and wives and children followed them, and huts sprang up all around us like mushrooms.

Finally one day the last load arrived, borne along apparently more by the rhythmic songs, the groans, shouts, cries and invocations than by the actual labour of forty porters splashing in the hopeless *potopot* into which so much passage had transformed the long, tortuous path. It was our electrical plant, a Lister engine and dynamo and five Exide batteries, which, up until that time, had been affixed to the front part of one of our trucks, giving us the blessing of good, abundant light in every camp we had made from Kakitumba on. What that blessing was to be thereafter we could not fully realise then. But to-day I can say that without it we probably could not have lived so long in the forest, and certainly we never could have accomplished so much writing in addition to the field work.

The transport, owing to the narrowness of the path and the weakness and laziness of the natives, had been a hard one ; and Dennis, who had directed it, arrived as pale and exhausted as if he had carried the whole thing on his own shoulders. But he had a good recompense in the success he obtained when, after some adjusting, the engine started. For its sudden puff-puffing brought among the monkeys

<sup>1</sup> A tip.

almost as much pandemonium of cries and shouts and shrieks as the lighting of all the bulbs provoked a little later among the natives, who, of course, had never seen such a marvellous magic.

Our settling down for a long period at *Mtembo* Camp was the result of the exploration of the surrounding forest that, with the help of Sultani Kalumé and the Mambuti, I had been steadily making since our arrival there.

It had taken, first of all, a great deal of talking and promising, and tipping and leg-pulling, too. My rifle had to show its power and precision against innocent trees and empty tins. Electric torches, lighters, fountain pens, alarm clocks, binoculars, revolver, gramophone, and whatever else we had which was new to these primitive natives and able to produce impressive and unexpected results, had to be displayed to convince them that with us they had nothing to fear because of our extraordinary powers. Then wonderment ousted terror in the Mambuti, and Kalumé grew ashamed of his excessive fears, and a few of his best subjects were pushed by some sense of pride and emulation. A first group was formed, prepared to dare the legendary spirits and monsters of the forest, and to penetrate with me into the unknown *tabu* country.

The first journeys were short, five or six hours in all, as I did not want to risk a return of fear in pushing the natives too much ahead ; and, in the meantime, I needed badly to get myself accustomed to the heat and humidity and trained to the strain of that hard marching, and to learn to imitate the pygmies in slipping silently through the vegetation

and in remaining immobile in ambush in spite of all the insect bites.

Gradually the natives gained confidence in me, and I in my own strength and resistance. More pygmies and porters asked to join our expeditions. These became longer, until I was able to walk for several days in continuation in the same direction, returning by a wide detour. Naturally the results increased in proportion.

From the very first few days I acquired the conviction that we had come to the right spot, and so decided to establish our base camp for an indeterminate period at *Mtembo* Camp. After a week I had already a general idea of the distribution of Okwapi. They had immediately disappeared from around our camp, driven away by so much noise and smell. But with two hours of march west, or north-west or south-west, I could be sure to begin to find their footprints, which grew more and more numerous the farther I advanced in those directions, especially toward the west. That is, the farther we went directly away from the Beni-Irumu road.

Just in this direction, during our wanderings I had found two rivers—discovered, I should say, as no one had hitherto known of their existence—and, on the suggestion of the Mambuti I had named them Mutwegwe and Merilota. The former eventually flowed into the Sambuku, a tributary of the Ituri; the latter into the great Ituri itself. Being unable to spare the time necessary to trace the sources of the two new rivers, I had to content myself with exploring long sections of both. This meant days of slow advance, knee-deep in water; continuous caution to avoid the small poisonous snakes

swimming down with the current; acrobatics to cross or descend the many violent, slippery little falls, or to pass under the barrages made by huge trees fallen across the rivers. It meant stumbling over hidden rocks, skinning my shins against enormous submerged roots and falling suddenly into invisible holes five or six feet deep. But it gave me also the only possibility in the forest of seeing and watching its four-legged inhabitants, and of finding their most frequented drinking-places, two things that the thickness of the vegetation and the absolute ignorance in which the pygmies found themselves in that part of the country, would never otherwise have permitted.

Thus on the shores of the Mutwegwe we found a natural clearing in the middle of which the river lazily spread, forming several small islands of clean white sand, where, among hundreds of elephant, buffalo and hog footprints, we saw dozens of Okwapi tracks. The pygmies themselves seemed to be astonished at the sudden view of sun and light, fresh green, so glorious after the darkness through which we had been struggling for so many hours. And quite excited at the multitude of tracks, at once separated on my order, each one following a different path of the many that converged from the surrounding forest.

Half an hour later Makulu-kulu reported that all these paths, at least thirty of them, showed that Okwapi had used them in the recent past, or were still using them every day to come to bathe and drink at the clearing.

Immediately I decided to establish another permanent camp near by, and, not wishing to risk disturbing

the Okwapi, I picked up a site about half an hour's march from the clearing, along the shores of the same river. There in the following days grew up Okwapi Camp No. 1, composed of a tent for me and the huts for the service (bath, kitchen, personal boys' quarters, etc.), a hut for the Sultani, and an entire little village for my men and pygmies. And the choice proved very sensible, for in the following months the best and most satisfactory work was to be done just around that clearing and from that camp.

When the moment came to return to the base camp, instead of following again for twelve or thirteen hours the long, winding course of the river to its confluence with the Sambuku, and then again all the meanders of this river to *Mtembo* Camp, trusting entirely to the sense of orientation of the pygmies, I asked them to open a new track directly to our "home." And on arriving I had the pleasant surprise of finding that the two camps were separated only by six hours' of march, a distance which we soon reduced to less than four hours by putting all our hundred men at work to cut a more comfortable path along this new route.

However, in spite of the innumerable tracks I had found everywhere and of the many Okwapi startled and put to flight every day by our approach, I had not yet succeeded even in glimpsing a single one. These encounters, the study of the footprints and the answers of the pygmies to my untiring questions, were beginning to teach me something about the animal's life. But not having yet any deep knowledge of it, the problem of capturing two Okwapi worried me considerably, as I wanted to get them as

quickly as possible to have the necessary time for accustoming them to captivity and man's food, and to be able to send them to London before autumn. And I wanted to get them without the use of cruelty, or any method which could wound or frighten them.

The first system of capture the pygmies proposed, while ingenious, was not appealing. The Okwapi, so they told me, urinates very seldom, but then for a long period, five or six minutes, during which fastidious, as he is, he dares not move for fear of soiling the white of his legs. The Mambuti, who are miracles of patience and forest-craft, often take advantage of such a moment to surprise the animal, slip as near as they can to him and cover him with spears and arrows. Now, with the unconscious cruelty of the primitive man, who wounds and sometimes tortures an animal with the same innocence with which we cut a flower or a branch from a plant, they suggested to me that they would wound the animal in the four legs, just enough to prevent his running away and to give them the time to tie him securely with ropes.

"Then," concluded Makulu-kulu, with the utmost simplicity, "the Bantu bring the animal to the 'campi,' we pull out our spears, you put on the wounds your *dawa*<sup>1</sup> which heals every sickness."

And even to-day he is unable to understand why I discarded his plan so brusquely.

Anyway, obligingly he broached others, all equally

<sup>1</sup> Literally, as in this case, "*dawa*" means medicine—any kind of medicine, disinfectant, pill. In the sketchy language that the natives use with the white man, in order to employ as much as possible the words that the *Bwana* knows or can understand, "*dawa*" is used for anything contained in a tin, bottle, tube or little box (as poison for rats, tooth paste, shoe polish, hide preservative, nail polish, chloroform, brilliantine, Oxo cubes or metal cleaner), and of which the native can see the effects but not understand why or how they are obtained.







unattractive. For to try to find a mother in the act of nursing her little one, kill her and throw ropes over the young; or to hunt a mother with dogs until the small one, exhausted, falls behind and can be pounced upon, in addition to being stupidly and unnecessarily brutal, would defeat my primal interest, which was to capture a young one in a way that would give it the least possible fright, and to avoid absolutely the killing of the mother.

For the same reasons I would not even take into consideration the plan of trying to surround the Okwapi with a hundred natives and pygmies and drive them against a long net through which the adults could perhaps pass, but in which the young would certainly become hopelessly entangled; or toward a palisade in which they could be held prisoners. Furthermore, I well knew how easily the natives lose their heads in such cases, and I did not want to assume the responsibility of the prohibited animals which, in the heat of the hunt, would undoubtedly be killed in disregard of my orders.

For the capture of other rare animals, such as the Kenya Bongo, loops hidden in the vegetation along the paths usually followed by the animals have been successfully used. But I had to discard this scheme also, because although I knew very little of the Okwapi, yet I was sure that their irregular habits, exceptional cunning and great strength would make it unfeasible.

The one thing that remained for me to do, therefore, was to resort to the system most widely used by all the natives and pygmies in the entire Okwapi country, the *zemu*—or pit—eleven or twelve feet

M

- [facing: 1. TZAMBOHO, THE BASE CAMP,  
AFTER FIVE MONTHS' WORK  
2. CUTTING A "MOTOR ROAD" THROUGH  
THE EQUATORIAL FOREST TO THE BASE CAMP

deep, three feet wide and eight feet long, masked with sticks and leaves, which I have already mentioned.

This was a work that both Bandande and Mambuti knew and liked, as for them it meant the prospect of easily obtained and abundant meat, antelopes, gazelles, pigs, leopards and little rodents and carnivora, even if, for once, not the Okwapi, that I had clearly told them were not to be touched at any cost.

In a few weeks thirty of these *zemu* were excavated, one for every track, old or fresh, leading to the Mutwegwe clearing; and to avoid the danger of an animal breaking its legs by falling into them, I lined the bottoms with thick mattresses of leaves. When everything was ready, and every pit and all the sand islands and banks of the river liberally sprinkled with the salt the Okwapi likes so well, I withdrew all the men to *Mtembo* Camp, leaving at Okwapi Camp only the two best men, Mandalume and Itaita, with the task of inspecting daily and very quietly all the holes, and of keeping them in good condition; and with the order that as soon as an Okwapi would fall into a pit, one of the boys should come with all possible speed to call me.

It was especially during those weeks of life in common at Okwapi Camp No. 1 that the pygmies and I grew to know each other well and to become real friends. Makulu-kulu—"little butterfly" is the translation of his name, if you please—was there with two dozen of his subjects, the youngest and best of his little tribe. Attractive little beings they are, all of them four feet and six or seven inches in height, strong and muscular, with tiny bones amusingly visible in the delicate conformation of their hands

and feet. Their skin is copper-coloured; their coarse black hair grows in small round tufts; their eyes are keen and intelligent, the nose usually flattened, the mouth decidedly prognathic, showing strong white teeth, all the front ones carefully filed into sharp points.

Just as marvellous as their sense of direction and their cunning in finding, reading and following tracks, is the way these Mambuti have of exploiting every resource of the forest.

Their only garment is a loin cloth, and it is quite interesting to see how it is made. Many varieties of trees supply the different types of raw material required by the market. The pygmy gets the quantity and quality he needs by cutting a strip of bark from the proper tree. His plump little wife keeps it boiling in water for some days, while her mate is out scouting or hunting. Dry wood is plentiful, and so is the clay with which a *mfundi* makes the round pots which can be bought with meat. One day when the pygmy feels like staying home—that is, the small clearing where for a week or so he has made his home—he spreads the bark on a smooth trunk and beats it for hours on end with the bottom of a pygmy elephant tusk, patiently cut to a flat surface. Under the beating, the bark spreads more and more. Every other day or so the operation is continued, alternated by long periods of boiling. When the material reaches the desired dimension and softness, it receives a last boiling, together with splinters of one of the various dyeing woods, until it assumes the required colour—purple, or golden yellow, or dark red. A careful drying in the shade, some holes made with a sharp piece of wood so that a thin liana can be

inserted through them, and the garment is ready, belt and all.

Some feathers of a multicoloured bird stuck in the hair with some *kasuku*, a resin more adherent than glue, make a head-dress perfectly inexpensive and elegant. Alternatively, for the rainy season, something warm is generously provided by the pelt of one of the multitudinous family of monkeys which the pygmy, for once, has carefully refrained from cutting into pieces and eating with the meat.

For hunting the Mambuti use as far as they can the tiny bow they make from certain supple woods, and diminutive arrows which they prepare in every spare moment with some straight, hard reeds. Two leaves set at an extremity assure the direction, and a sharp point covered with the poison obtained from the red root of the *kilabo* makes the innocent-looking reed a lethal weapon. Of course this is no good against elephants and leopards and buffaloes and Okwapi. For his most dangerous adversaries (and biggest supply of meat) the pygmy uses a short, stout spear, the strong blade of which he has to buy, with elephant tusks and meat, from the chiefs along the road.

These blades, and salt, are the only two things for which he must depend upon others. "Great Mother Forest" freely gives him everything else: the *kasuku* with which to make long-burning, sweet-smelling torches; the hard wood, burning very slowly, to be carried around as a perennial lighter; the soft wood, pieces of which beaten together give the music for the symbolic hunting dances the moonlight always surprises in every clearing where there are pygmies; plenty of fresh spring water to drink;

and exquisite honey and dozens of varieties of roots, seeds, leaves and fruits very good to eat ; and flexible sticks and *magongo* leaves, as large as a towel, which are the only materials a pygmy woman needs to build, in less than half an hour, the family hut when a new clearing is reached.

However, a Sultani, like Makulu-kulu, being more important than the average pygmy, would not be satisfied with a simple hut. He requires a complete apartment, as he wanted to show me as soon as we were settled at Okwapi Camp No. 1. Bending very low, for the hut into which he ushered me with a grand gesture was not five feet high, I entered, marvelling at the cleanliness of the interior, at the comfortable bed he had made with some branches and lianas, and at the dry warmth kept inside by the slow-burning wood. Ten times more comfortable than my own tent, I thought. But how could he sleep in so small a space, with three wives and several children, I asked him. With an even more regal gesture, he showed me two little passages, on the right and the left, connecting with two other huts. "Here," he said, "sleep the ladies ; and there is the nursery"—or something equivalent.

Then, seeing my amusement, and forgetting all his regal attitude—"And now, *Bwana*," he requested, with the most pitiful air, "now that I have shown you my three huts, give me three *matabisha* of salt."

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### THE FASCINATING INFERNO

THE weeks, the months, slipped by. The Okwapi, which had vanished from the surroundings of Okwapi Camp No. 1 on our arrival there, and kept well away during all the time we were at work at the clearing, began to feel again the attraction of their old, delightful bathing-place as soon as our men were withdrawn and the racket had subsided.

Every Sunday Itaita, coming to fetch the weekly *posho*<sup>1</sup> for himself and his companion, would report that he had seen more and more footprints on the paths leading to the clearing and along the banks of the river. Sometimes my heart would jump with sudden hope at seeing him appear before my tent in the middle of a weekday. But it would only be to bring me the great news that an Okwapi had gone just to the edge of a hole, or at other times that an adult had even slipped into a pit with a front leg, recovered his balance and run away.

Did that mean that the pit system was no good? But why, then, everywhere else in the forest could pygmies capture almost daily big adults and half-grown males and females by this same method? And how did it happen that, having blocked every path, the Okwapi could still reach the islands of the Mutwegwe?

<sup>1</sup> Ration of food for the week.

"Muungu," Little Butterfly told me in a tragic whisper, accompanied by his most dramatic gesture, "Muungu, *Bwana*. This is all in the hands of Muungu, the god of hunting."

"*Chi s'aiuta, Dio l'aiuta*," we say in Italian—"Who helps himself, God will help." Inspired by Makuluku's words and on the basis of this proverb, I went back to the clearing. The *zemu* were so perfectly masked and their mouths blended so well with the rest of the ground that Eric, who accompanied me on the inspection, immediately fell into one; a harmless accident, fortunately, because of the providential mattress of leaves in the bottom.

Yet the Okwapi, either by smell or simply by instinct, were able to detect these holes, and I soon understood that to reach the clearing safely they used a very simple system: they entered the water several hundred yards up or down-stream and followed the river to their preferred islands, returning by the same route. The manœuvre revealed a cunning and intelligence much superior to our expectations; but, in spite of our admiration, if we wanted to get the Okwapi we had to find some remedy.

So at both ends of the clearing I built up a palisade across the river, and, following Eric's suggestion, I ordered Mandalume and Itaita to give an even more natural appearance to the *zemu* by putting the droppings of elephant and buffalo in the middle of the leaves covering them.

After which, the whole device having been perfected as much as possible, I hopefully left it again in the hands of Muungu. And I reassumed my unending wanderings in the continuous effort of

strengthening my acquaintance with the Okwapi, the other inhabitants of the forest, and the fascinating inferno of the forest itself.

Inferno, I say, and a fascinating inferno, with the full meaning of these two words.

The aspect of the forest is never the same. Under the sun it is glory, a riot of colour. Every green it is possible to imagine, from the most delicate, silverish tone to a richness of shade, so dark as to appear black, gleams in its leaves. Brilliant red glows in its strange fruits; snowy white and deep purple in its orchids, pale grey and warm brown in its mushrooms, and all the yellows and browns and blues and mauves of creation in the mosses and other parasites that cover the trunks of its immense trees, soaring hundreds of feet above the ground and often twenty or thirty feet in circumference. The impression, then, is of a splendid park made for the happiness of chimpanzees and colubus and baboons and monkeys, devoting themselves, by the thousands, to their aerial acrobatics. Hidden streams and falls murmur gaily. Twitterings and songs and sounds of myriads of birds and insects and small animals come from every side. And almost every one is a new sound, never heard before in any other place.

Motionless, silent, dark under the leaden sky preceding a storm, the forest is an entirely different world. A cape of fear and mystery envelops it, which is no less magnificent than its former mood of glorious gaiety. Nothing moves. Everything is silent. And it is then that one concentrates all his strength in the intensified sight and hearing which instinct calls on the defence against all the hidden presences by which one feels to be surrounded.

[*facing*: ONE OF OUR BOYS GIVES A "MATABISHA"  
OF SALT TO A PYGMY WOMAN







This state of tension, of oppression, may last an hour or a day until it is suddenly shattered by the beginning of the storm. The hosts of thunder take the field. One hears them, faintly at first, approaching from a great distance. Louder and louder, terrifying in their grandiosity, they draw nearer, pass over one's head and depart to herald to other parts of the forest the coming of the storm. They are the first advance guard, and a shiver passes through the low forest, herbs and bushes and young trees, which lianas have laboriously bound and bound again into a vast compact mass.

A pause, while all nature is in suspense. Then the following contingent arrives, and its entrance seems always a surprise, so violent it is. The darkness is broken by shafts of lightning that dazzle the eye. The breathless silence is rent by spectacular electric cracklings that the ear painfully resents. It is the time for the high forest to tremble, the realm of the lofty palisanders and mahoganies and cotton trees, which mingle their foliage in an unending dome. It is the moment some old giant always chooses for his impressive death. A prolonged crackling sound, which grips your stomach as when in a big sea the prow of a transatlantic steamer goes up, up, seeming never to end its dizzy ascent. A new sound, as of a great waterfall, drowning out the first, as the branches and leaves of the giant open for him a passage through the low forest toward his grave. A crash, repeated by the echoes as a funeral oration, and the immobility, the silence, are re-established again, weigh heavily over every living being.

Finally a cold, nervous wind comes to announce

that the rain, the star of the performance, is arriving. From far away one hears it, for the rain advances majestically, with a powerful, diffused drumming on the leaves. Being in a clearing, one can see its great opaque curtain approaching nearer and nearer, enveloping one in its chill grey folds, sweeping forward on its inexorable course. Never a small rain. Always a cataract. And when it arrives on the scene it is just as when a prima donna appears in the grand tableau finale of an operetta. All the actors surround her, each vying with the other to make the most noise. Thunderclaps and lightning flashes, vegetation in violent, wrenching movement, trees swaying, trees falling. Huge birds flying blindly away, monkeys shrieking, buffaloes galloping, elephants in rapid and ponderous pursuit of shelter. Instantly the animal path in which one is walking is transformed into a stream, the streams become rivers, the rivers pandemonium. And everything, everything, is so big, so powerful, so effervescent of luxuriant life that one forgets even that he is wet to the bone and iced to the marrow.

At night, again the forest world has changed. Neither moon nor stars know how to shine through the thick, immense dome. Everything is so black, and the rays of your lamp, stopped at so short a distance by the massed vegetation surrounding you, seem to enclose you in a tiny, uncertain globe of light infinitesimally small and hopelessly lost. From the wall of darkness pressing hostilely around you, giant flying beetles perversely utter sounds like night-birds ; nightbirds startle you with the whining cries of beaten dogs ; unknown animals moan like children in pain ; other living beings, which you cannot

identify, move constantly near you with a crackling and rustling magnified by the mystery of the night, so that your eye continually travels toward your rifle, useless as you know it to be.

And with the sun and with the clouds, during the day and during the night, millions of insects teem around you. Every moment, from every side, from above and from below, they assault you, biting, stinging, spitting caustic fluids, bestowing repulsive caresses, penetrating everywhere, even asphyxiating you with their aggressive odours.

The big animals are nothing. The insects are the inferno ; and, as soon as you move, the vegetation.

How that appallingly lush, unbelievably overpowering, entanglement of dead and living trunks, of plants and bushes, and vines and branches and leaves and thorns, opposes one obstacle after another to one who wants to pass through it ; how sometimes it even seems to become animated by some devilish living force to arrest, to trap, to strangle one, I have already tried to describe.

How it hampers and complicates the task of one who wants to observe the animal life safely hiding in its impenetrability ; how it makes it almost impossible for him to take photographs, even at a few yards distance, with the best camera and the most luminous lenses and the most supersensitive panchromatic negatives to be found on the market, is something that I will not even attempt to explain.

In the interior of the forest alone, during the course of the expedition, with one or another of my five cameras and eleven lenses, I exposed exactly 2,471 negatives—isochrome, panchromatic, super-panchromatic, ultra-sensitive, specially made plates,

cut-films, film-packs and roll-films. Of these, 1,635 are of animals ; or, to say better, were intended to be.

Think of the constant care to preserve these negatives in the intense humidity of the forest. Of the labour of developing them for hours on end in the sketchy " laboratory " at our disposal ; the thousands of tins of water that dozens of porters had to carry from the river, that we might carefully wash the films. Then the job of drying, filing, printing all these negatives. And for all this, my wife and I could spare only our evenings, for our days were too filled with other necessary activity.

But this part is nothing in comparison with the labour it took to expose the negatives. A total of scores of hours of waiting in ambush, of hundreds of hours of march to follow animals or to reach a watching-place, of millions of insect bites received in marching and waiting. And all I can show in the end are about fifty photographs, and not so extraordinary either.

I have here before me some odd, nebulous pictures that could be indifferently called " Cloud Effects at the South Pole," or " A Night of Fog in Piccadilly Circus," or " The Stratosphere at Fifty Thousand Feet of Altitude." Yet they are all that remains of one of the best chances I had in my life in the forest when, wind and unusual luck helping, a huge Okwapi, probably very old, remained for several minutes in the field of my camera without noticing my presence in a nearby bush, where I had been hidden for hours.

As a matter of fact, these negatives at development had shown some faint, almost indistinguishable, images. But then, taken by zeal, I had set myself

to reinforce them, and the chemical products, evidently having deteriorated in the excessive humidity, completed the disaster, leaving me as a recompense for several weeks of effort that reddish strip of celluloid covered with spots which look like clouds, but aren't even that.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### SOLVING THE RIDDLE OF THE PYGMY ELEPHANTS

NIGHTS spent on a strategic tree at the edges of the Mutwegwe clearing awaiting dawn and the congregation of thirsty creatures ; days passed in painful immobility in the reeds of a swamp, or in a thicket particularly well supplied with insects, to watch a much-used path ; hours devoted to following a fresh track with every conceivable gymnastic to avoid the cracking of a twig or the rustling of a leaf—almost all useless tortures if I were to judge from the photographic results they yielded—gave me, however, the only possible opportunity of seeing, one by one, many of the forest denizens.

In this way I was able to solve the riddle of the pygmy elephant, and once for all, as far as I am concerned. In the Tchibinda Forest in past years I had repeatedly seen what I was perfectly convinced were pygmy elephants. Then, returning to Europe and America, I heard so many doubts expressed by various zoologists that I began almost to disbelieve my own eyes. In fact, it is true that often young elephants leave their herd and constitute one of their own. Many times hunters, lacking in experience in this particular field, have killed some of these small elephants, believing them to be pygmies. The tusks, brought back to specialists, were then found to be



the tusks of young specimens of the usual, well-known race, and a very hurried, but almost general, conclusion was drawn that pygmy elephants existed only in the fantasy of natives and of the hunters, who had too easily believed their words.

Never having killed a small elephant in my life, nor even having had the occasion of examining tusks of that kind, I did not know what to think.

Then at Tring, one day, I was encouraged by the opinion of as eminent a zoologist as Lord Rothschild. Picking up some of the ivory contained in his wonderful collections, he emphasised the small importance of length and weight in comparison with texture, and showed me very clearly the difference between small tusks and small tusks, those belonging to pygmy elephants having all the characteristics of weight and grain and colour of old age, while the others were unmistakably small only because they had belonged to very young individuals of the usual *elephas africanus*.

Before leaving with this expedition, in discussing the matter with Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, then Secretary of the London Zoological Society, I found that he, instead, admitted that some exceptional, rare individuals, though mature, might remain very small in dimensions; but he believed that such dwarfs are to be considered as freaks, just as an albino specimen, and that they therefore do not prove in any way the existence of an actual, well-separate and definite race of pygmy elephants.

The Belgian Colonial Ministry, also, seemed either to be in doubt or to disbelieve in this race, as all the most accurate lists of protected and non-protected

animals contained in the legislation on hunting made no mention of the pygmy elephant at all.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of all I had heard, it was very interesting to find out something *de visu* during my stay in the forest. And this I did, very carefully watching various herds, studying their habits, comparing their footprints and examining in the native villages as many tusks as I could find. These latter I was able to see by the hundreds, as the law prohibits the sale of tusks less than five kilos in weight, so that all the small ones the natives find in the forest or get from the pygmies are carefully stored, waiting for some ivory-worker to buy them secretly for a few francs each.

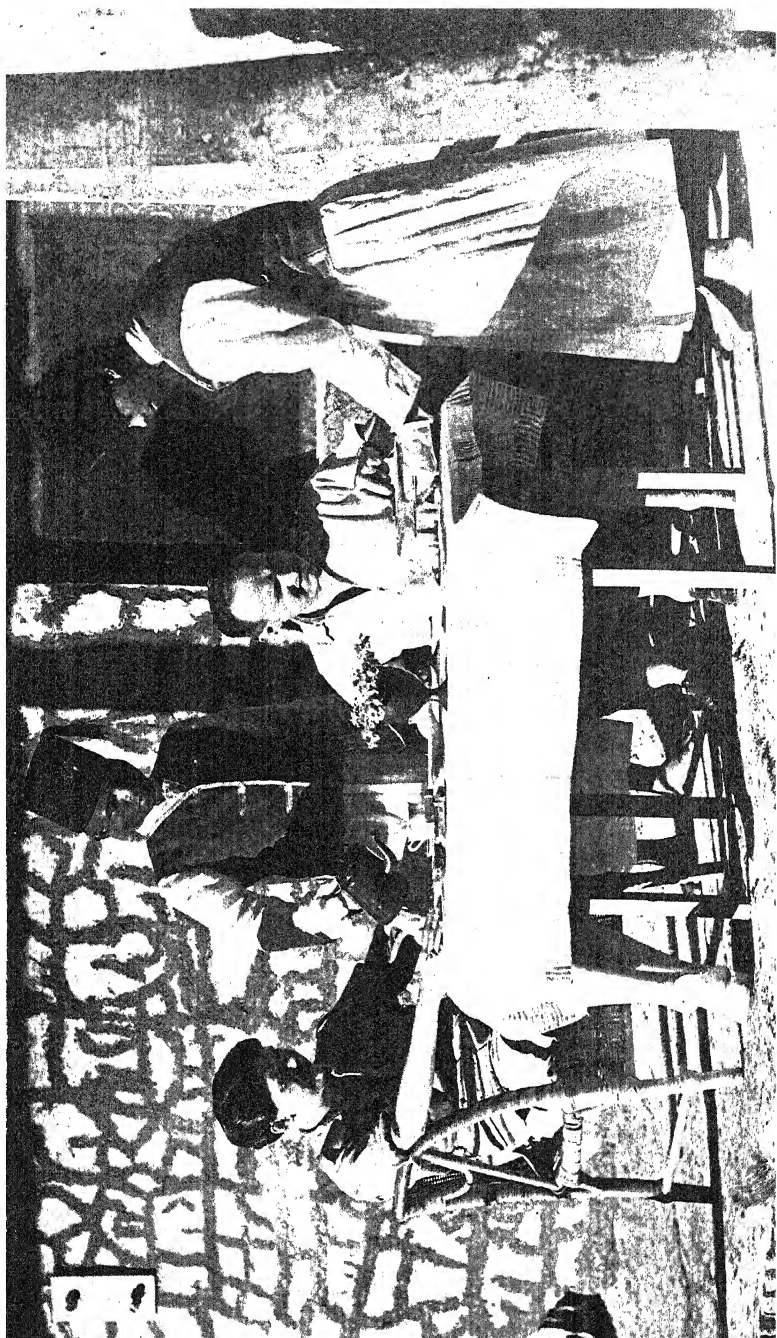
Of course every observation I made I would check immediately with Mambuti and Bandande hunters of various clans, every time remarking that if there was a discrepancy it was usually because of my own rashness or inexactness, but very seldom because of a mistake on the part of the natives. In fact, the natives know their game in a marvellous way, in every detail of life and habits; and as the Watussi, being so interested in their cattle, have a thousand names to specify the colour, nature, birth, etc., of every cow, so the native hunter, and especially the pygmy, having lived with the game and for the game and by the game since uncountable centuries, has a deeper, more intimate knowledge of every animal of his territory than any scientist, official or white hunter of the world has ever been able to approach.

And to say that, when questioned by someone in whom they have confidence, who knows them and

<sup>1</sup> Only the very last regulations, decreed April 12th, 1935, by the new Governor-General, Mr. Ryckman's, contain a mention of the pygmy elephant.

- [facing: 1. left "HOW ABOUT A LITTLE FRUIT THIS MORNING?"  
1. right "NOBODY BRINGS ME MY BREAKFAST"  
2. left "AAH! NICE FRESH MATUNGULU!"  
2. right "HOW MANY DO I GET? ONE . . . TWO? ONLY?!"





their language, and has enough African experience and training to discriminate between actual facts and sheer superstition, the natives are not reliable in these matters, is a mistake.

Once more I was able to prove to my full satisfaction the truth of these statements when I made a résumé of my notes of many months, and compared the information obtained from the oldest and most intelligent hunters of different villages and of the various clans of pygmies with whom I had worked and, in many cases, even of the pygmies who had actually killed the elephant whose tusks were under discussion.

Every time, everyone whom I questioned on being shown, privately, a certain number of tusks which I had marked with pencilled numbers and mixed together, was able without hesitation to separate the ivory of the *Somà*, as the natives call the normal elephant, from that of the *M'zei* or *M'gei*, the pygmy elephant. Then, without faltering or doubt, to divide in each pile the tusks of males and females, of adult, half-grown and young specimens. And the most experienced hunters, with striking approximation, would even determine the age of each pachyderm, the time since it had been killed, or, if the tusks had been found in the forest, in what part of the forest they had been discovered, and if they had lain there a short or a long, or a very, very long time.

The number of matters to be dealt with in this book not allowing me the space necessary to report in detail all my personal observations on this question, nor the tedious results of my numerous cross-examinations of pygmy and other native hunters,

N

[facing: TEA AT THE BASE CAMP SEEMS  
A LUXURY AFTER A LONG SAFARI

I limit myself to relate the conclusion I reached at the end of this patient work.

The races of elephants of the Kibali-Ituri forest I can divide, as far as my experience goes, into two groups. To the first, belong two races of which I have no personal knowledge nor proof: the white pygmy elephant, and the huge four-tuskers.

The former, if they exist, would be pygmies among the pygmies, as they are said to be no higher than four feet. Their colour is supposed to be decidedly whitish; their ferocity extraordinary; their habitat the "zone of mystery," as M. Gerard, then Administrator of the Irumu territory, described to me the thousand odd square miles north of the Stanleyville-Irumu road included between the Epulu, Mava, M'bure and Akaba rivers.

Between parenthesis, I succeeded, with what an amount of patience and perseverance no one will ever realise, in persuading some pygmies to accompany me into that zone, which certainly appeared as intact and mysterious as any I have ever seen. But of the white, diminutive monsters I was unable to find any trace, although this does not prove much, frightened out of their wits, as were my pygmies during the few days we remained in that *tabu* country.

However, almost every old resident of the Kibali-Ituri is prepared to recount and swear that Mr. Hackars, when he was Commissaire of the District, succeeded in crossing the invisible borders of that "zone of mystery," only to find himself abandoned by his pygmies and shortly thereafter attacked by a small herd of the white dwarf elephants, which kept him in dire distress on the branches of a tree for a good many hours until a strong rescue party

came to deliver him. Whether these accounts are true, and the pachyderms in question were really white pygmy elephants, I cannot say ; nor, buried, as I am, in the forest, can I check in any way the actuality of the story, Mr. Hackars being now somewhere in Europe.

The second race seems even more fantastic : big elephants, as many old hunters on many different occasions have described them to me, with two ranges of two tusks each. Can one believe this ? I certainly did not, ascribing it to the superstitious side of the men's mentality, rather than to their actual experience and knowledge which I emphasised a few pages before.

Whether I was right or wrong, no one knows yet ; I, less than any other. But the fact is, that some months ago an official in Lubero was considerably annoyed at the thought that a chief was trying to pull his leg when that native presented four tusks, quite similar, and assured him that they came from the same elephant. The official's more than natural opinion that the chief was trying, through such a tale, to pay the permit for one elephant only instead of the two he had actually killed, was exploded some days later when the same man, indignant at being thought a liar, returned with the skull of the elephant in question. The skull showed four tusk-holes, and into these the four tusks fitted so perfectly that all doubt was banished.

The skull, complete with its tusks, is now on its way to Europe, very probably for the Tervueren Museum, or some other scientific institution, where it will be displayed as a very rare freak. But is it that, and nothing else ? Or is it considered such

only because no one knows yet that a race of four-tusked elephants, of which so many pygmies speak, really exists and still lives in some unexplored depth of the immense forest?

However, letting the skull remain a freak and these questions unanswered, there is a second group of elephant races regarding which no doubt can remain; two absolutely different and well-distinct races that I have seen and observed and studied for months on end—the *Somà* and the *M'zei*.

The *Somà* is one of the many varieties already well known of the *elephas africanus*. Its ears are triangular, not square, and far smaller than those of the *e.a. capensis* of South Africa; not semicircular nor so small as the *e.a. oxyotis* of Sudan; probably approaching in size and form the ears of the *e.a. knockenhaueri* of East Africa.

The adaptation of the *Somà* to the special conditions of the forest, its only habitat, seems to be shown by many peculiarities. Its hearing, and especially its sense of smell, are more developed than in any other pachyderm I have ever seen; while its sight is very poor, this faculty being not very useful because of the thick, continuous curtains of vegetation which preclude visibility in the forest. The *Somà*, in fact, cannot see a white man at sixty feet distance; and a pygmy, covered with his hunting paintings, if his presence is not revealed by the wind or by any noise, can approach to within ten or twelve feet of the elephant without being seen.

The general colour of the *Somà* is much darker, for instance, than the *e.a. cyclotis* of West Africa, and its breast and shoulders are as reddish as the forest mud.



Its tusks are unusually short, so as not to hamper its movements among the multitude of huge trees. The biggest I have seen weighed 112 lbs. for a male, and 87 lbs. for a female. Evidently, because of the same reason of its surroundings, the *Somà* reaches a very limited stature, the largest specimen I have seen being less than 9 feet in height.

The other elephant I refer to is the *M'zei*, whose female is called *Malekwe*. Its two most striking features are the ears and stature, a third being its character and temperament, equally in contrast with the *Somà's*.

The ears of the *M'zei* are almost monstrous, so big they are in comparison with its bulk, and almost square in form, with corners rounded. Its stature averages 5 feet, and only once I glimpsed a male which seemed about my own height, 6 feet. Usually the *M'zei* are so small and their ears so big, that the latter give the impression of reaching the ground. The indication given by the remarkable development of the ears corresponds with the uncanny acuteness and alertness of the *M'zei's* hearing, which certainly represents its greatest and most reliable protection, as its scent is not particularly sharp ; and its sight is very poor, even poorer, perhaps, than that of the *Somà*. In this abnormally acute sense of hearing there probably is to be found the best reason for the general disbelief in the pygmy elephant, and also the conviction of its extreme rarity entertained by the few people admitting its existence. For the *M'zei*, intercepting the slightest noise at an incredible distance, normally has plenty of time to elude the hunter's pursuit by silently disappearing from his path, helped in this by its small bulk and great agility and surprising swiftness of movement.

Much lighter in colour, the pygmy has short, extremely sharp tusks, comparatively very heavy—at least a third heavier, I would say, than tusks of the same length of a young *Somà*. The tusks of the pygmy, of the finest grain one can find, are usually reddish in colour, and in an old male can take the most beautiful tones, dark purple, blood-red, rich brown with golden streaks, as of precious marble, often with the points so smoothly and deeply flattened on the sides as to appear like rough scimitars. The heaviest I was ever able to find weighed 9 lbs. for a male, and a little less than 6 lbs. for a female. As for the young ones, a pair not reaching a pound in all was unanimously judged by the natives to have come from a male of about three years of age.

No less distinct than the differences in the stature, tusks and ears of the *M'zei* and the *Somà* is the dissimilarity in the composition of their herds, which often live near each other, but never mix.

Of the many I have been able to observe, or to count the footprints after they had left, I can say that *Somà* herds average ten or twelve individuals, and seldom reach a score. While the *M'zei* herds are always very large, often consisting of ninety to one hundred and fifteen animals.

Another and very remarkable difference can be noted, as I have said before, in the character and temperament of the two races. And, I may add, in the defensive and offensive tactics, as well.

Generally speaking, and always taking into consideration the factor of the special characters of particular individuals, the *Somà* is usually peaceful, good humoured and nothing of a born fighter. If it can avoid encountering man, it does so. If it is





suddenly faced by a human enemy, in the majority of cases it makes a half-hearted charge which seems more of a warning than an attack. Then, if the man does not throw his spear, the *Somà* stops, and speedily retires. Even if wounded, it more often tries to find safety in flight than revenge in fight.

From what I have observed of the *M'zei* and their females, the *Malekwe*, they customarily act in a diametrically opposite way.

If, without being noticed—which is quite exceptional—one succeeds in watching a herd of pygmy elephants, especially when they are disporting themselves in a pool or river, one can judge them to be the most delightful, inoffensive clowns, as I thought myself some years ago when I had the opportunity to observe them in the Tchibinda Forest.

Or if, through a happy coincidence of circumstances, as occurred to us once during a bongo hunt, a band of pygmies manages to appear suddenly beside an *M'zei* herd, and taking immediate advantage of the surprise makes the greatest possible amount of noise, it may be, as in the case referred to, that panic seizes the little pachyderms and impels them to a startled and sudden flight.

But these are exceptions. The rule is that the *M'zei* has little fear, a vast deal of cunning, plenty of aggressiveness and more vindictiveness than the Mambuti may care for.

Many times the pygmy elephants, warned by the sound of a group of hunters approaching, disdain to run away and resolutely stand their ground. Completely immobile and silent, they remain well hidden in the vegetation. As soon as the hunters are near enough, the oldest bull gives an angry squeak, and

the herd, with inconceivable fury, starts to the attack. When the *M'zei* are in this mood, a bad day is born for the Mambuti. Not satisfied with the direct charge and the deaths it may have inflicted on the enemy ranks, many instances are recorded where the oldest males and females continue the battle, each on his own account, pursuing a fleeing pygmy until he is overtaken and killed by a thrust of scimitar-like tusks, or compelled to seek safety in the higher branches of a tree. In the first case, the elephant will not be satisfied until the war dance of his heavy feet has reduced the adversary to an indescribable pulp.

In the second case, urgent trumpetings call for assistance, and a group of infuriated *M'zei* begins an offensive which does not stop until a strong force of Mambuti comes to a counter attack, or the man is shaken down from the tree and finished, or, if the tree is too powerful a giant to succumb, until the assailants are completely exhausted from charging and attacking the mighty trunk with their hard tusks and powerful shoulders.

Once, having expressed some incredulity at a description of this kind, I had to pay for it with a good two-hour march, the Mambuti being unwilling to close the subject until I had seen a proof of their words. And the proof was a convincing one, all right: the trunk of an enormous palisander standing in the middle of a circle of wildly trampled vegetation and gashed by several scores of deep, roundish holes. The most excited pygmy of the lot, the one who was said to have been kept on that tree for two nights and two days less than a month before, took off the beautiful "magic" necklace he was wearing and showed me the point of broken ivory, red on the

outside, white at the cut, which was attached to it. Then he inserted it in one of the deepest gashes on the trunk of the palisander, into which it fitted perfectly. There, a crazed *M'zei* had left it embedded after a particularly spirited charge ; and the pygmy, when the attacking pachyderms had been killed by the spears of his clan, had dug it out and taken it as a precious souvenir of his greatest adventure with the belligerent *M'zei*.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### THE ARISTOCRAT OF THE FOREST

TEN hours' march through the forest with Makulu-kulu, the little devil, continually forcing the pace. Three hours waiting in a tiny, natural clearing, with nothing but the soaked ground to sit on, the chilly mists of evening to observe. Then Kalumé and the porters arrive. A cup of brackish tea, a tin of I-hope-I-don't-ever-see-any-more corned beef and some bread only partially rescued from the ants. A few hours of uneasy sleep, and in the thick darkness preceding dawn a stealthy advance through icy, dripping vegetation.

And now here we are—Kalumé, Makulu-kulu and I—perched on the branches of a big mahogany tree waiting for the first rays of light to reveal to us the clearing which Makulu-kulu has assured me lies just before us.

I am here because I have the great hope of photographing some Okwapi when they come in the early hours of the morning to bathe in the stream that borders this clearing.

Kalumé is here because he cannot help himself—this fantastic *Bwana* must be humoured no matter what idiotic notions he has.

And Little Butterfly is here because if the photographic job goes well he has been promised—an umbrella! Why, in heaven's name, an umbrella?



He will never use it for the purpose for which it was intended, but he has confided to me that no well-dressed chief can be without one. When next he goes to Kalumé's village he will carry it proudly, tightly furled be the rain pouring or the sunbeams dancing. Doubtless it gives him social prestige, makes him a sort of K.U.O.—Knight of the Umbrella Order. At any rate, it is the dearest dream of his heart.

My cramped muscles are protesting violently. The cloud of mosquitoes, marangouins and elephant flies in which I am enveloped are slowly driving me crazy. Hour after hour drags by. The birds have wakened and are filling the air with their morning chorus. The horizontal bars of the sun have cut through the veils of mist to illuminate the little clearing.

Then Makulu-kulu's voice rings out, a harsh, shocking sound after those hours of strained silence.

"Well, well," he says—approximately—"we have no Okwapi to-day."

I climb stiffly down from the tree and fix Little Butterfly with a baleful eye. But he is nonchalant. Almost leisurely he reaches behind him and breaks off a small strong branch in the noiseless fashion they have. Then a lightning dart forward, and he has speared neatly through the head a bright green snake which had been concealed in the vegetation a few inches from my boot.

"*Mobaya*," he says calmly, holding it up for me to see, "*mobaya kabisa*."

And "*mobaya*" (very bad) it must have been, for he tossed it away into the foliage instead of guarding it as a choice contribution to the culinary department as was his usual custom.

After that I was, of course, defeated. The only thing called for, was to pass around the cigarettes.

However, before beginning the return trip to the base camp we made a wide circle around the clearing in order to see if our failure was due to bad luck or to a mistake of Makulu-kulu's in picking up the place. The fresh tracks we found on all sides showed very clearly that neither was the cause of our useless ambush. It was merely the cunning of the Okwapi that had again outwitted us.

Here an Okwapi had walked straight toward the clearing. Then, reaching the footprints we had left here some hours before, had suddenly swerved and gone in the opposite direction. There, another had come almost to the edge of the clearing where either his sense of smell or hearing, both so keen, must have revealed our presence, and with a quick turn he had galloped away. And so others, all around us, on their way to their feeding or drinking had approached until some hundred feet and then had gone. While neither I, nor the two hunters, with their heightened sense of the forest, had perceived the slightest noise or movement near us.

But fortunately there was the umbrella-mirage present in that clearing as anywhere else Little Butterfly went those days. With a short detour on our return journey, this enticing mirage led Makulu-kulu—and Makulu-kulu led us—to the Mutwegwe clearing. Shortly before reaching it, the mirage gave our guide the idea of halting our little procession, a truly brilliant inspiration, as far as I was concerned, for the much desired rest it gave me and, as the following events were to demonstrate, even more brilliant from the umbrella point of view.

Meanwhile, the other pygmies of Makulu-kulu's entourage had joined us, and one, at his order, melted away into the forest. Not a quarter of an hour later he reappeared with the news that he had discovered a very fresh track, only a few minutes' old, of a full-grown Okwapi heading toward the clearing; and that by some special miracle the animal was absolutely unaware of our proximity.

Another signal from Makulu-kulu, who had quickly consulted me with an unusually enthusiastic gleam in his brown eyes, and the pygmy disappeared again. Another short, tense wait, and the scout was back. The Okwapi, he reported, was noisily bathing in the river, but the vegetation was so thick that the little tracker not daring to approach closer—and perhaps put his chief's umbrella in jeopardy—had not been able to get even a glimpse of the animal.

Again a glance and a nod from Makulu-kulu, and a second pygmy shinned up the huge palisander underneath which we had been seated. Up, up, he went, quick and agile as a monkey, until he vanished in the green dome of the surrounding trees.

A minute or two passed, then a few clear bird notes filtered down to us, notes which the uninitiated would have taken for the song of the *mutuki*, but which gave to Makulu-kulu all the information he needed. A *mutuki* answered through his lips, followed by some quick whispered words to me. The other *mutuki*, up above us, whistled something else to guide the pygmies who had branched out on both sides of the clearing and to tell them how to form a circle around the animal.

As assured as if he were watching the Okwapi with his own eyes, Makulu-kulu advanced, too, Kalumé

and I at his heels. Soon the splashing of the animal came to us more and more distinctly until we arrived within a few yards of the stream and all sounds stopped, freezing us into immobility as we stood, two of us with a foot lifted in the air.

A noise of moving leaves, followed at once by the song of the *mutuki* told us that the Okwapi having become aware of man's presence had plunged into the forest on our bank of the river and stopped there to try to determine clearly what was taking place. Further noises informed us that the pygmies who had reached the opposite shore were now re-crossing the river toward us.

A warning from the pygmy at my side, all the men I could see suddenly stiffening, and immediately before me the head of the Okwapi appeared.

His throat was exactly of the same silverish colour of the *mandulu* leaves on which the sun was beating; the remainder of his head and his great ears were almost indistinguishable for form and colour from big spearlike leaves, the under part of which is of a rich dark red. Before I was able to take in the fact that he was a beautiful male with horns at least  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 inches long and free of skin at the tips—indicating quite an advanced age—I had already snapped half a dozen pictures.

The order I had given previously to the men to remain absolutely silent and motionless from the moment the animal came into view until he showed intention of going away, proved very sound. Astonished to find himself surrounded by all those human statues, to feel so many pairs of eyes fixed on him, the Okwapi showed plainly his indecision, turning his head in every direction as if to find a

way of exit or to detect a movement which would decide his course of action.

The only being to break that trancelike immobility was myself in changing the films and focusing the camera, although I tried to make every movement as smoothly and silently as possible. And it was upon me that the animal finally concentrated his attention.

His big blue eyes took that glassy, sinister expression which the natives fear so intensely and which displays such implacable determination. His teeth ground with irritation and he laid back his ears, accentuating the strange outline of his head.

Then he lunged forward, giving me just the time to jump quickly aside as I was clicking my fifteenth photograph.

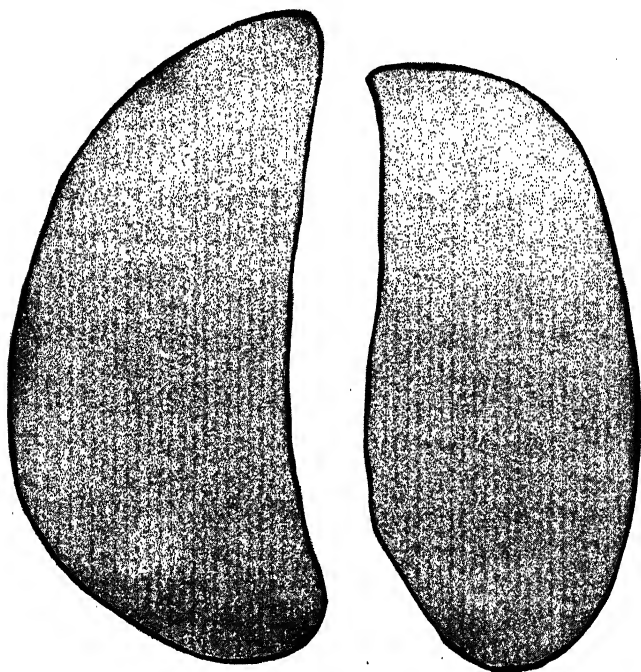
As for the pygmies, they knew only too well that they were not allowed to use their spears against an Okwapi, and to remain passive before such a big animal had already strained their courage too far. Knowing what those glassy eyes meant, in a moment they were all swarming up the nearest trees. The Okwapi found no one before him, and in two strides of his giraffine gallop had disappeared into the mass of *mandulu*, which closed over him instantaneously.

But the photographs remained, the first successful photographs, so far as I know, that have ever been taken of an adult Okwapi in all the majesty of his infinite kingdom, the evergreen equatorial rain forest.

By the time that our work in the forest had yielded those few hard-won photographs, we had not yet been able to make a single capture, but we could mark already another job accomplished. The study of the intimate life of the Okwapi that no one before

had had the opportunity or the patience to make, was completed, and the habits and customs of this, the most aristocratic of African animals, no longer represented a mystery to us.

Everyone knows that the Okwapi is a member of the giraffidæ family and that he can be considered



PRINT OF LEFT REAR FOOT OF ADULT MALE OKWAPI ( $\frac{2}{3}$  ACTUAL SIZE)

an actual living fossil, as his head is almost undistinguishable from that of the prehistoric Samotherium of the lower Pliocene of Europe extinct since about fifteen million years; while his body is that of a usual antelope and his legs have stripes similar to those of a zebra.

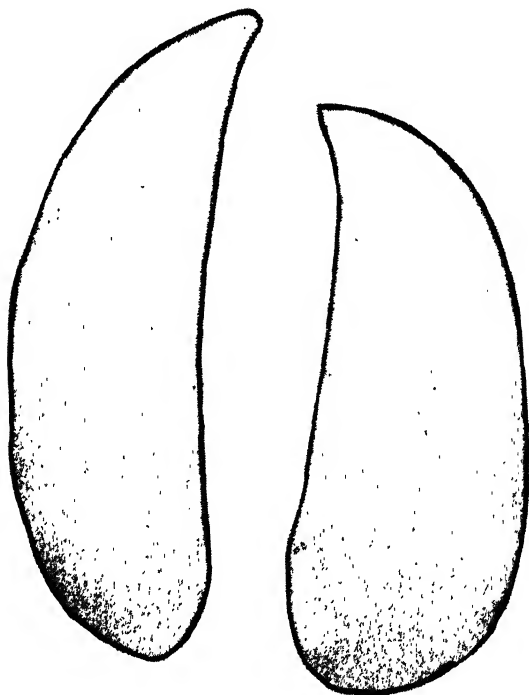
[facing: MAMBUTI HEADDRESS MADE FROM  
THE PELT OF A NIGHT-APE







Many have admired the few Okwapi specimens mounted in museums. The long thin head of a dark red which becomes almost black on the nose, reddish-grey at the sides and pure silver underneath. The large red ears delicately fringed in black from



PRINT OF LEFT FRONT FOOT OF ADULT MALE OKWAPI ( $\frac{2}{3}$  ACTUAL SIZE)

which runs the short stiff mane ending in an abbreviated tail tipped by a tuft of black bristles. The back, so dark as to appear black, shaded into rich tints of dark red, of light red, of silverish red on the sides and under the belly. The beautiful stripes of pure black and shining white here and there irregularly

[*facing*: THE OKWAPI, THE MYTHICAL ANIMAL  
RESEMBLING THE ZEBRA AND THE GIRAFFE

edged in brown which adorn the legs, completed from the knees down to the cloven hooves by immaculate white stockings with a bracelet of ebony at the ankle.

But no one, until he can have the opportunity of seeing this strange animal in his own surroundings, can imagine the impression he makes as he advances through the entangled forest. His queer rolling gait, his size and strength, his extraordinary inflexibility of purpose give him the appearance of a creature emerging for a moment from some bygone past.

Something has been known of the peculiar fastidiousness of the Okwapi, but the extent of the meticulous care he gives to his precious coat is truly remarkable. Cleanliness, in fact, would appear to be his most striking characteristic.

The rain, the dripping of the trees after rain, a splash of the reddish or greyish mud of the forest, seem to irritate him beyond words—to be the only things he fears and avoids at any cost.

During the day, and even during the night in the intervals between sleep, the Okwapi never tires of washing himself carefully, licking his skin at every point to which his long blue tongue can reach. That is, practically his entire body, for his prehensile tongue although of the ruminant type is 16 or 17 inches in length and coils and uncoils like a snake; and his head can easily reach his tail, as he bends his long neck parallel to his body as if it were joined at the base with a hinge.

The Okwapi are confirmed solitaries and untiring wanderers. Except for the short time of the mating season and for the few months when a mother nurses her young—during which they usually hide in parts of the forest inaccessible to almost every

other animal and to every man—they always live isolated. Sometimes they meet in a clearing near a river where some sun penetrates which can dry their luxurious coats after a good bath, but then each one goes his own chosen way. This gives them an extreme liberty of movement and the possibility of slipping away unobserved when a group of even three or four would not be able to. Where an Okwapi finds himself toward evening, there he makes his bed, far away, an entire day of march, or perhaps only a few hours from the sleeping-place of yesterday and to-morrow.

Not even the necessities of his stomach—or, to be more exact, of his four stomachs—tie him to one place more than to another. Great Mother Forest is abundantly rich in everything. Marvellous keeper of humidity, her rivers are fed by thousands of minor streams and cool brooks which in a slow winding and unwinding murmur secretly beneath the thick green mattress. The tender leaves, the succulent stems, the tasty roots which the Okwapi prefers grow in profusion everywhere. *Matungulu*, the tall reeds which push up straight to a height of twelve or fifteen feet, as if in an effort to obtain some air and light, with their crisp leaves and the delicate white flowers similar to an orchid at their base. *Moodi*, in the clumps of which the Okwapi knows how to find the big red flowers, pulpy and full of moisture, and the young leaves rolled into a thin funnel with their mother-of-pearl stems tender and full of flavour as young celery. The leaves of *sangatoto*, shaped like a spear-point; and the *anzararo*, the *bahapopo*, the *apopo-mongele* and the *memengano*—to continue to use the names in the Kinande tongue—

small shrubs all with perfumed bitter leaves so pleasant that more than once I have eaten them myself as a salad which has nothing to envy the choicest lettuce.

As for what I believe to be the Okwapi's medicines, charcoal and a certain kind of soil, he can, of course, find them everywhere ; charcoal from trees burned by lightning, and *bulongo*, as the pygmies call a reddish, slightly saliferous clay which commonly obtains near rivers. And it is no superstition of the pygmies that the Okwapi wants these strange elements when indisposed, but an actual fact, as I have been able to see myself and has been proved to me by numerous examinations of excrement.

The forest which even for the pygmies has still so many limitations, for the Okwapi has none, neither of space nor time nor obstacles. His resistance is exceptional. Usually he walks slowly, trying to avoid pools of water and *potopot* in order not to soil the spotlessness of his white legs ; but if necessary he can keep for an entire day, perhaps even longer, that rolling and *ralenti* gallop of his without showing the slightest fatigue, at an average speed of six or seven miles an hour, which in the forest is phenomenal. Enormous fallen trees suspended in mid-air, entanglements of lianas, sharp stumps, piercing thorns, steep climbs, huge stones or gluey swamps—nothing stops him. What he can he jumps, and the spring of his hind legs is not less than that of a good Irish jumper. Where it would seem to be impossible, he passes under. His giraffe head, lowered, forms with the muscular neck and the strong withers a perfect arch which penetrates and slips easily under an obstacle. The short, heavy mane, which reaches

to his tail, and the tough skin, a quarter of an inch thick, protect him against the hardest scratchings. His big, woodenish legs which seem made only of bone, insensible to pain, bang against thick vines and green branches, breaking them as if they were dry sticks.

That barrier which the Okwapi can neither pass over nor under he breaks down or passes through without hesitation. The horns, present only in the male, very short and covered with skin except at the point, are of no consideration. But the bony plate, half-an-inch thick, which begins at the first vertebra and extends down until just above his eyes, under the impulse of a mass as high and heavy as that of a good horse, and of a determination ten times stronger, becomes a formidable battering-ram. I have myself seen an Okwapi breaking in this way a trunk of very hard wood a foot and a half in circumference with only one thrust of that prehistoric head of his.

What defeats even that battering-ram is quickly put out of fight by what could be called his heavy artillery. Gauche, with those movements apparently slow and mechanical, but actually sharp and determined, the Okwapi turns and gives one kick. Two kicks, if indispensable, but very seldom, for few obstacles can resist that cannon shot. And through the breach made he forces his way, the head almost touching the knees, forming a mask pointed as a torpedo. Passes, and continues his gallop, his sure feet never stumbling, never slipping even in the gluey mud of the insidious *potopot*.

With a temperament so cold and courageous and stubborn, and with such weapons at his disposal, it

is easy to understand how the Okwapi is no less feared than desired by the natives whom, in case of necessity, he does not hesitate to charge, careless of their spears and arrows.

The Okwapi's first pursuit in the morning, as the last before going to sleep, is to bathe in the river. Not rolling in the water, but galloping through it, taking good care to choose a place where the bottom is sandy, so that the water splashing him all over in an inverted shower cannot become muddy. Then in a clearing under the comparatively mild rays of the rising or setting sun he carefully dries himself with the tongue.

He has good cause, too, to be jealous of his skin, for in addition to its glorious colours it has other great advantages. The darkness of the back blends perfectly with the almost black appearance the vegetation has at five or six feet from the ground, where it is thickest. The black-and-white stripes of the upper part of the legs is a mimesis of the strips of light and shadow projected through the lower part of the foliage, and the white of the stockings, of the silverish colour of the dried leaves on the ground. The result being that at five or ten yards distance, the maximum visibility of the forest, he is absolutely indistinguishable.

Another curious peculiarity of the Okwapi is represented by his very large eyes which have, independently from each other, an extraordinary field of rotation, so that he can look in different directions at the same time, as can a chameleon. When he is quiet, the expression of his eyes is sweet and gentle, but at the slightest alarm, or if he grows irritated, it changes to a hard, glassy appearance

which the pygmies and natives greatly fear, and which certainly is impressive. It is only in such emergencies that the Okwapi, which has extremely rudimentary vocal chords and a larynx rendering him as dumb as a giraffe, utters one of the two sounds I have ever heard him make : either a snort similar to that of a horse, or a loud grinding of the teeth.

After having covered during the day more miles than a man could do in a week of effort, when sunset comes the Okwapi selects with great care a resting place for the night, dry, clean, slightly elevated, and well protected from rain.

A last careful toilette, with particular attention to the white stripes—a last sacrifice to that spirit of fastidious cleanliness which makes of the Okwapi the one being keeping immaculate and free from ticks and flies in that world of mud, humidity and putrefaction which is the forest. Then when night transforms that world into a solid mass of fearful darkness, daintily the Okwapi lays his head on a high root or liana as on a pillow and seeks his rest, his great hypersensitive ears thrust forward to safeguard his sleep.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### THE CAPTURE OF THE FIRST OKWAPI

“ *Bwana ! Bwana !* ”

It was Itaita, one of the two men I had left at Okwapi Camp No. 1. Before the door of my tent he was now panting so heavily that he could say no more, and his black muscular body was gleaming with perspiration. He must have been running desperately, for it takes a lot to make a native perspire and pant.

“ *Bwana ! Bwana !* ” Itaita gasped again, still unable to bring out his great news.

But his face was shining. But the tom-tom of the camp, which by an unwritten law cannot be beaten except at my order, was filling with crazy, excited rhythms the big clearing we had not yet finished scooping out of the forest. But from every direction our natives, a good hundred, were running toward my tent, waving in the air their implements of work, jumping and dancing.

It wasn't difficult to understand what had happened.

An Okwapi had at last fallen into one of the *zemu* of the Mutwegwe clearing.

“ *Ndiyo, ndiyo, Bwana,* ” Itaita was finally able to say. And with a fusillade of words succeeded in telling me that it was a full-grown male, an enormous animal, and in perfect condition.

Our hundred natives shouted like mad all around







my tent, bestowing on the shoulders of poor Itaita congratulatory slaps sufficient to demolish him. Full of happiness because the work of their *Bwana* was finally crowned with success. And also, and even more, because their childish minds summed up the situation, as always, in the easiest way :

Now the *Bwana* would go back to his far country, his funny mania of capturing live Okwapi satisfied. When the meat of that animal is so tasty, and its skin cut into belts such a miraculous cure for every sickness of the belly ! *Basi* (which means, according to the translator's taste, "enough," or "to hell with it"), with living in that forest full of mysterious dangers, with walking for days and days carrying heavy cases which branches and vines constantly snatch from one's head. *Basi* with toiling to dig holes while a leopard could surprise one unarmed, and with sleeping always in new places where nobody has been before, and which are under the control of who knows what malignant spirits. *Basi* with going continually through thick bushes from which every moment a buffalo can jump out, or a Bongo with its sharp horns, or even worse one of those terrible beasts which inhabit the *tabu* parts of the forest—birds bigger than a man and apes more ferocious than a gorilla ; snakes and dragons, and other creatures too horrifying even to think about.

This line of reasoning was why they attacked the work I at once gave them with an alacrity and an energy never seen before, grabbing machetes and axes and hoes, and hacking away at the trees and undergrowth of the little path we had previously cut to unite our big clearing with Okwapi Camp No. 1. For now it must be enlarged to permit the

passage of the big stretcher on which I was planning to bring the Okwapi back to the palisade we had prepared so many months before near our base camp.

As I walked, or rather ran, toward the *zemu* with all the speed that joy and impatience can give, I was followed by the glamorous song of my men.

"A big Okwapi has now come to the *Bwana*," improvised the official song-leader.

"And a big *matabisha*, a generous tip, will come now to all of us," answered the chorus in a storm of machete slashes.

"A huge, huge male," Itaita had said, "and very, very savage."

But the superb animal which I found when I reached the *zemu* some time later surpassed all my expectations. A good six feet high at the shoulder, he filled almost completely that ten feet long, three feet wide pit, and when he raised his head his nose reached just to the top of the hole, eleven feet. The legs, of course, I could not see, but the back and the neck, of a red so dark as to appear black, with the thick red mane running from the ears to the tale, was simply a poem of strength and power.

The head, too, was extremely beautiful, with its long, thin, thoroughbred lines, its mixture of rich colours, ebony black, mahogany red, shining silver, its immense blue eyes, and its enormous red, black-bordered ears in continuous nervous movement.

Seen from so near, that head made a strange impression because of the unusual distance between the line of the ears and of the eyes, and because of a large ridge or bump between those lines where usually there is the slight protuberance made by the bony plate I have mentioned before. In this case,

however, it was so exaggerated that I thought this bump had been occasioned by the behaviour of the animal in the hole, for at my arrival he was continually jerking his head up and butting the sides of the pit, alternating this performance with a series of vigorous kicks. But a few hours later I was to learn to my cost exactly what that bump was that had called forth my sympathy.

Accustomed as I have been for three-quarters of my life to dealing with horses, I began to talk to the big Okwapi at my feet in a monotonous and soothing tone, and strangely he seemed responsive, little by little quieting down. As long as I talked to him and called him by name—"Beautiful," although quite banal, was the name it occurred to me to give him—he not only remained quiet but allowed me to stroke his back with a long leafy branch, as if he understood that I was driving away the flies that had gathered in clouds.

But as responsive as he was, I was thinking that the problem of getting him out of that narrow hole without hurting him with ropes and then transporting him to the base camp tied on a stretcher, without making him too nervous, was going to be a difficult job. This problem naturally I had previously studied and solved theoretically. How theoretically, I could realise only then.

In preparation for a capture I had brought with me three anæsthetics, two German specialities—one to be given by mouth mixed with water, the other by injection into the cervical vein—and some old-fashioned chloroform which I had already tested with satisfaction on other smaller animals which had fallen into the pits.

Could I have succeeded in anæsthetising the Okwapi, everything would have been quite simple. The men, then, would have lost their fear, which at every movement of the animal made them run away, and could have worked in peace. Once the stretcher which they were constructing near-by, was ready, we could have lifted the Okwapi out of the pit and tied him firmly on the stretcher in such a way that when we reached the palisade I would only have had to cut a rope to free him.

But I soon found that my solution was not so good in practice as in theory, and that to call an Okwapi "shy," "sweet" and "gentle," as all the descriptions I had ever read had done, was sheer poetic licence.

The only result of two hours of various efforts was that I had managed to pass a rope around the Okwapi's neck, taking advantage of a moment when it seemed that the anæsthetic was taking effect. But at the end of those two hours, "Beautiful" was more awake than before, and only I half-stupefied by the vapours of the chloroform, although I had worn an old military gas mask the whole time.

So I lost every hope of transporting him that day, and decided to build around the pit a strong palisade in which to leave him for some days until he could become a little tame and permit me to take him down to the base camp.

The enthusiasm of my hundred men, who had meanwhile arrived, quickly oozed away during the alternations of storms and sun under which we worked to build the palisade, and was replaced by utter discouragement when in the middle of the night we set to work to prepare an exit for

"Beautiful" and began to dig away the ground before the pit.

The Okwapi, at first, grew violent. All those odours, our lights, those picks working under his nose, offended his delicate senses. But as time passed, he seemed to realise that so much agitation was taking place in order to free him from that prison in which he had had to remain for twenty-four hours in relative immobility, mired down in sticky mud, an ordeal for an animal of such a wandering and scrupulously clean disposition. And he began to follow the progress of the excavation with so much interest that he made no objection to my stroking his head.

The night passed, and the first light of dawn found us still at work. Or, to say better, it found me at work, tired, wet with sweat, plastered with mud, digging away at the last wall of earth which separated our excavation from the pit. As for the men, good as they were, they had refused to work so near the Okwapi, and clustered outside the palisade they continually favoured me with suggestions that I run away, for certainly at any moment the animal would jump on me. A prospect which seemed to me at that time absurd, but on that point also I had soon to revise my opinion.

Two hours later, having at last finished the job, and even freed with a stick the front legs of the Okwapi from the thick mud imprisoning them, I express to him very clearly my opinion that if he wants to, he can now come out. But I, of shovelling, I have had enough. I conclude while I climb over the palisade with the most energetic "Come on!" that my respiration will allow. And "Beautiful," as

if in answer, begins to move, makes a first effort to get out of the pit.

"Come on!" I shout again. He snorts, makes another try, and in two jumps is out of the *zemu*, while I climb down quickly and run to the spot where I have left my camera.

A great shouting comes down from the trees on which, as so many monkeys, my men have settled, and I turn my head just in time to see "Beautiful" galloping straight toward the point where I climbed over the palisade.

Doesn't he see the palisade, those big trunks fifteen or sixteen inches in circumference, firmly tied together? He sees it only too well. A crack of the devil, two poles snapped in two, and the Okwapi's head appears in the breach. Evidently what I had supposed to be a bump is the thick bony plate, as hard as steel, that in this magnificent specimen is developed in an exceptional measure. And what effects it can produce I begin to see with my own eyes.

The shouts of the natives increase, exciting the Okwapi even more, and with a quick turn he gives a kick of a totally unexpected power, wheels again, and charges with lowered head. Forgetting the camera, I jump to the palisade just in front of him, waving my arms and yelling to the natives to keep quiet.

A maddened horse, or even a buffalo in fury, would have deviated. But not the Okwapi. Another bang with his head, other poles cracking, and I find myself on the ground ten feet away, just in time to see "Beautiful" squeezed between two trunks, half in and half out, while the racket of the natives reaches its highest diapason.



The time to get up, and it doesn't take me very long, and the animal has managed to slip out from between the poles, shakes himself, and starts galloping straight ahead, indifferent to me and my gestures. I throw myself at the rope, which is still tied around his neck, but I miss it, and between this and the push he gives me as he passes, I fall again, and the animal with his slow gallop disappears into the thick undergrowth.

But even at that moment, winded as I am, and furious with my natives, who are still stupidly shouting in the tops of the trees, I find time to marvel at the amazing metamorphosis that has taken place in "Beautiful." No longer the sensitive, delicate head, the gentle, intelligent eyes, the huge ears pointed forward so alertly of the "Beautiful" who had seemed to listen to my words. The animal who has charged, who has passed so near me and has gone, is another creature. Never before have I seen such a complete change. The head stretched forward, with the ears laid back, assumes an entirely different aspect; has, even, a likeness to the head of a rhino. The eyes have become glassy and cruel, the whole expression altered to that of a stupid, brutal force intent only upon its one obstinate determination to get away at any cost and in spite of every obstacle.

However, not all my boys are cowards of the same calibre. And when a few minutes later they have descended from the trees and I have expressed to them my feelings in the most carefully selected insults I could find in their language, two of the best, Lumalese and Kunabo, come to me.

"Wait a little, *Bwana*," one of them says, and both disappear on the trail of the Okwapi.

The others animatedly discuss the matter between themselves. Then : " Wait a little, *Bwana*," repeats the eldest. A new burst of enthusiasm propels them all on the tracks of the other two.

Left alone, I, too, followed the tracks of the Okwapi, carefully spared by the feet of my men, to the big river, where I had anticipated he would go to drink. But when I reached it I saw that the bottom was muddy at that point, and therefore, judging by the traces, " Beautiful," fastidious to the excess, had gone to find a cleaner stream in the crystalline water of which to cleanse himself from all the mud that covered him.

I had nearly reached a small stream when Kunabo appeared with a beaming face. Without a word, but with a few clear gestures, he informed me that the Okwapi had been recaptured and tied up. And as I looked in the direction he indicated I heard the almost imperceptible sound of grinding teeth.

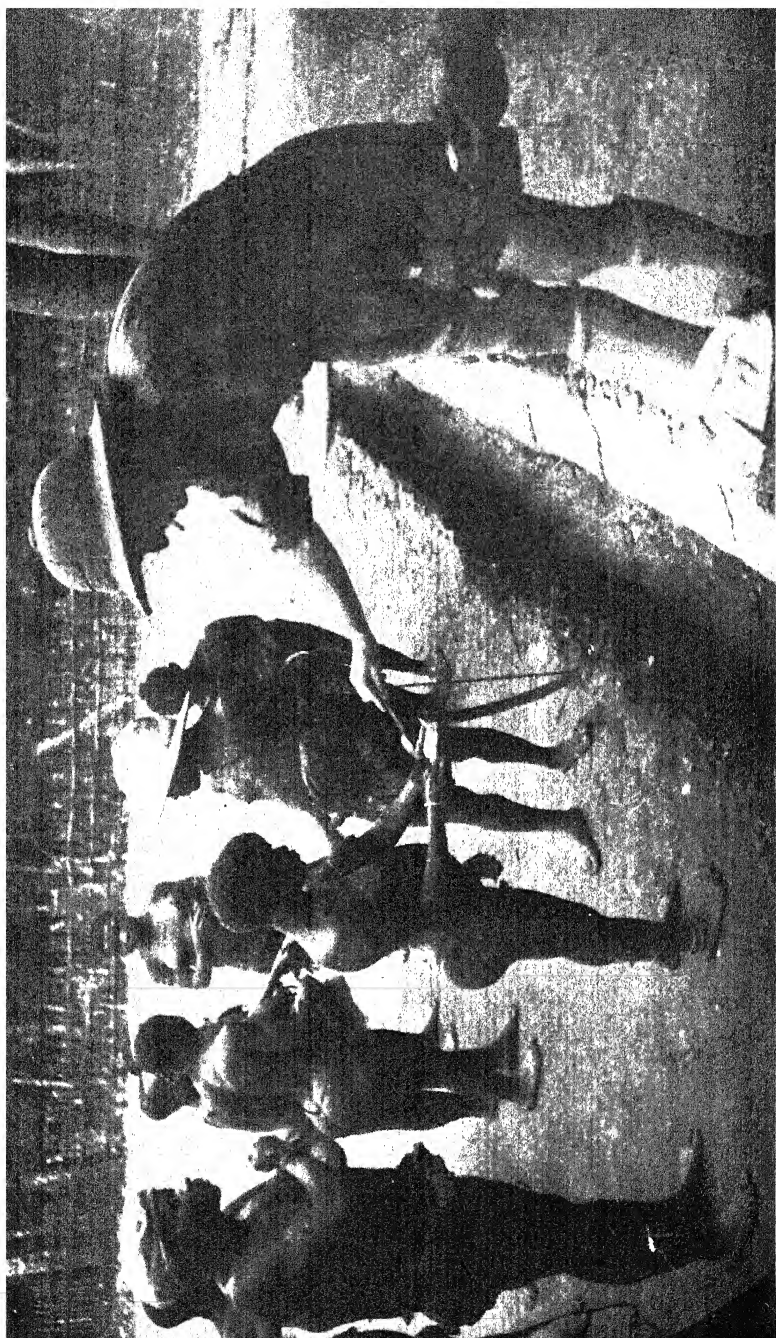
" ' Beautiful ! ' " I called.

My voice was answered by a crash of leaves and branches, and a dozen natives, whose presence near me I had not even suspected, popped out of the bushes and ran away. A bird call over my head made me look up. There on the branches of a big tree was Lumalese on guard. Following his gesture, I walked around the enormous trunk, and only then could I understand how the capture had been made.

Among the monumental roots the little stream had formed a cool, limpid pool, in which " Beautiful " had thrown himself on his back, noisily splashing and pawing the air. So noisily as not to hear the two men approaching and hiding themselves behind one of the roots. Seizing the right chance, Lumalese,

[*facing*: THE PROBLEM WAS TO GET THE  
HUGE OKWAPI SAFELY OUT OF THE PIT





quick as lightning, slipped a rope through the loop tied around the animal's neck, while Kunabo tied the end of the rope around the tree. Then one had run to call me while the other sought refuge on the high branches from the fury of the Okwapi.

In his effort to free himself, "Beautiful" had pulled so strongly on the rope that his breath was beginning to be cut off, and when with a wild lunge he tried to charge me, the rope jerked him back so violently that he was thrown on the ground.

Half an hour passed, during which we managed to put two other ropes around his feet so as to be able to loosen the rope around his neck. Then, when he had just recovered his breath and was about to get to his feet, a great rolling of thunder passed in the sky. Only then I noticed that the forest had grown even darker than usual and that a particularly violent storm was rapidly approaching. I saw the animal sniff the air, look around, and then without any apparent reason throw himself down again.

"He dies!" murmured Kunabo.

But "Beautiful" and I had understood each other. To be a prisoner in the pit, to be surrounded by all those odours and noises; not to eat and not to drink, palisades and shouts, ropes at his neck and his legs—nothing had frightened him. But to have to begin that fight for freedom all over again in the teeth of the coming storm; to have to continue it in the disgusting mess of mud which in a few minutes the whole forest would transform itself—this was too much for him. Better renounce, give up the fight and let himself die, his eyes seemed to tell me with their sad, resigned expression.

"Leave him until to-morrow, *Bwana*," said

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Lumalese. "Tied up like that he cannot run away."

It would have been easy then for me to tie the animal up securely and put him on the stretcher. But the storm, which stupefies the native completely, was on us, and it was utterly impossible to think of transporting him to the base camp that day. Perhaps on the following day I could have found him there still alive. But to leave him for a long afternoon of torrential rain, a long night of misery—I couldn't do it.

So I made a decision which at the moment seemed to me more than natural. Slowly I approached "Beautiful," talking to him constantly in a soothing voice. He made an effort to get up or to kick me, but once more he seemed to understand, and quieting down remained almost motionless. Caressing his head with my left hand, with the other I cut the three ropes.

Another thunderclap in the sky, the curtain of rain rapidly drawing near, the advance guard of the first big drops already falling. The Okwapi gave a jerk, understood that no resistance impeded him. Free! He understood that he was finally free. Before I could retreat for a distance of more than two paces he was on his feet, his face resuming that implacable, savage expression.

Blocked as we were between two walls of thick vegetation in a narrow elephant path, his only way out was past the spot where I stood. For a second I thought I was in a bad position, and instinctively I held myself immobile. But "Beautiful" knew better. Turning to the right he crashed through the vegetation as if it didn't exist, passing by chance

or by fear, or, who knows, perhaps by gratitude, a good six feet from me, disappearing as if sucked in by the green wall.

Under the now unchained fury of the storm my natives stood, silently marvelling, at a short distance from me.

"To the camp," I ordered.

"*Ndiyo* (yes), *Bwana*," they replied in low voices, and one by one they followed behind me.

The *Bwana* had let go the Okwapi which for so many months he had been trying to get ; working so hard and making them work so hard. What the whites do and think, it is useless to try to understand. Their ways are so obscure, mysterious as the paths of the forest which bring you, nobody knows where.

So, I knew, they were thinking. The day after, I might be thinking the same. But then, as I plodded along through the mud, I was thinking only of "Beautiful," galloping straight and free before the great curtain of the advancing rain.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### WANDERING THROUGH AN EQUATORIAL DIARY

Two years in the Ituri Forest.

That means interesting white people of every type one meets. Chiefs, *kapita*, witch-doctors, house-boys, hundreds of pygmies of various clans, thousands of natives of different tribes, who share one's life almost day and night, who do and tell curious things, in whom one observes with unfailing delight amusing attitudes and naive reactions.

It means, too, animals, birds, insects, pets which attract curiosity and observation; strange noises, little miseries, deep satisfactions, details of life which, anywhere else, would be ignored as unimportant—a whole gamut of beings, things and impressions which fascinates one.

They make up, in short, the essence of one's new, strange, isolated life. To disregard them completely would be to give a false, contorted idea of that life. To write about them extensively would mean filling up a thousand pages. Between these two excesses, I see a medium way—to just give a hint of this and that. This is what I am going to do, picking up from my voluminous diary a sentence here, a little episode there, in the chronological order and the sketchy style of daily annotations, only when necessary



filling a gap with a name or an explanation to make the whole more understandable.

. . . . .

Kaluèse. Is a *kapita* of Kalumé. Wears the melancholy remains of an ancient helmet ; the multi-coloured patches sewn to what originally must have been a khaki shirt ; and all the holes that a pair of shorts can afford without losing its approximate place. Very worried, while walking, as to what may appear through these various apertures. Also by the three yards of prehistoric gun he carries on his shoulder.

When Ellen came up to Mtembo Camp the first time, Kaluèse shared with Mohammed, the cook, the honourable responsibility of bodyguard. The little procession was stopped by a herd of *Somà* just ahead of them. Mohammed delicately pressed her rifle, wrong end too, into my wife's hands, imploring her to shoot. But Kaluèse started forward, pugnaciously aiming his formidable-looking gun. The trouble was that his foot slipped in the *potopot*. He felt his shorts slipping, the holes dangerously shifting ; and trying to rectify, let us say, the situation and his own equilibrium, his finger slipped on the trigger. From one end of the three-yard rifle came out a terrific explosion, from the other an unexpected kick that sent Kaluèse sprawling in the mud, in the middle of the leisurely rain of all the nails, bolts, stones, pieces of wire, etc., with which the weapon had been charged.

Hearing the shot, I came running back to find no more elephants, but only Ellen crouched on the ground in the clutches of a convulsive *fou-rire*,

Kaluèse helplessly laughing with her, and Mohammed tittering at Kaluèse with patronising joy.

. . . . .

Before establishing *Mtembo* Camp, I made a run to Irumu. Mr. Absil, Commissaire de District, and with fifteen years' experience of the country, told me, literally: "Of the part of the forest where you are proposing to work, we know practically nothing. The natives do not want to go in there. Whether it is merely an excuse to avoid work or a true fear, I do not know. They speak vaguely of terrifying animals, but they either do not want to or cannot give an accurate account of them. Let me know everything you will be able to discover, for it will be extremely interesting and useful."

We certainly were thrilled.

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Just remembered system invented—or at least used—by missionaries near Astrida (Rwanda). Every Sunday, every single man, woman or child going to the Mass would be only too pleased to bring one stone. In six months all the building material for the new big church was ready on the spot. The natives thought that it was a miracle; the Fathers that it had been a damn clever idea. Immediately I arranged that every carrier returning to Kalumé's, that is, without load, must cut some branches to enlarge the path. Not being watched, they will do very little. But before two months the track will be completely enlarged.

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We have been at *Mtembo* Camp for twenty-six

days, but our bones themselves are still wet. When it rains, well, it rains, and in spite of all the double roofs and ditches, the tents are just flooded, from below as well as from above. When a storm is finished—and they are terrific and last for hours—the rain continues to drop from the foliage over our heads. When this stops, too, we are enveloped in a damp fog which penetrates everywhere. It is then time for the whole cycle to begin all over again.

Beautiful variegated mushrooms grow out of the pages of our books. Everything is white with mould. The metallic cases containing our clothes, when opened, breathe out the aroma of Lazarus's tomb. Going to bed, one seems to be diving into a chilly pool. When, for five minutes, there is no storm, no rain from the trees, and no fog, our tents and the native huts smoke as if they were on fire. Unfortunately, even five minutes like that are rare !

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B-r-r-r ! I saw Komanda, my tent-boy, happily sitting down before his own hut. His wife brought his lunch to him. It was, macabre in the middle of a big *magongo* leaf, a small hand, brown, very nicely formed, apparently having been boiled for only a few minutes, so "alive" it appeared. I couldn't say a word. But Komanda understood. Getting to his feet, he presented the horrid thing to me. "No, no," he said, "it is only the hand of a chimpanzee." Then, very simply and sadly, he added : "It is many months now since I have eaten any man-flesh. The *Bulamadari* doesn't allow it."

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Half a century ago it was quite startling for the natives to see H. M. Stanley opening roads over hills and mountains, building bridges, blasting rocks with dynamite. *Mvula Matadi*, they called him—"Rain of Rocks." Years passed, the name became corrupted to *Bula Matari* and *Bulamatar*, and was applied to the King of the Belgians, to all his representatives, officers, administrators, etc., and to the governmental authority in general.

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This place would be heaven for an entomologist, but it is hell for us. Altogether we are here to capture Okwapi and Bongo, not flies, small and big and gigantic ; not butterflies (almost every day there is a new variety landing on us in clouds) ; nor ants, white, black, red, microscopic and up to an inch in length, biting, emitting corrosive acids, filling a whole tent with such a vicious smell ! Yet, up until now, insects are all we have been collecting, especially in our clothes, beds, and—of course—in the soup.

The teeming, crawling, creeping, flying minute life of the forest is simply fantastic and pestiferous. The more you fight it, the more you destroy it, the more it multiplies. There is everything one might have seen in every other part of Africa, plus a million other hateful things that one has never seen before. Especially after the rain (and that is always) and at night (and that is the worst time).

There are small emerald-green streamlined triangles, making colossal jumps. Great snow-white moths with enormous red eyes. Huge metallic things, often three inches long, which go mad because they cannot penetrate a tent, and squeak like ten

furious rats. Thousands of flying ants laboriously finding their way through the double mosquito-net doors of our shelters, losing their wings in the process and then scratching obstinately at the canvas floor to get out, because they want to bury themselves.

There are beautifully coloured centipedes, leaving everywhere they pass a caustic, poisonous slime. Little butterflies with mother-of-pearl wings bordered in red and gold ; flying sausages noisily and blindly knocking everywhere ; and some long, viscous creatures which look like flying eels with phosphorescent heads. Bugs of so many kinds it would be impossible to enumerate them. Marangouins, almost invisible little brats, leaving on every inch of exposed skin big white swollen bites which itch for days, and often provoke a strong fever. Strange crawlers that walk in reverse, that is, with their eyes behind so as to be able to watch and devour other insects, larger ones, which follow them in the hope of catching them unaware from the rear. Spiders ? Some are rubies as big as a pinhead. Others, a little larger, are emeralds, with great golden eyes. Bigger, again, are the olive ones with a red cross on the back. Then, going up the scale, there are spiders with very thin legs two inches long ; others, horrible, hairy and poisonous, up to the most disgusting ones of a good four inches of diameter, and so perfectly flat that one finds them continuously in the stationery, in books or under a box.

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To-day we have discovered that, for the *bonne bouche*, there are also tarantulas and scorpions. How simply ripping !

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The natives we have taken at Kalumé's are poor devils, half-starving, half-stupid, and half-frightened to death. It takes at least three halves to make up such miserable specimens of humanity. Yet they are good-natured. Among themselves they joke and laugh, especially now that they have plenty to eat. And they are good-hearted. When we throw away a cigarette stub it never reaches the ground. Some native intercepts it in mid-air, gives it a puff as strong and as long as he can. Then he passes what is left to another, and so on, until nothing remains but the burnt lips of the last smoker. But he does not care. The same brotherly sharing happens when you give them a *matabisha* of food.

Women, instead, are pests. Almost the slaves, certainly the property of their husbands, as they are supposed to be, actually they rule as so many tyrants. And if three gather together, peace is gone. Immediately they begin to shout, fight and insult each other at the top of their lungs.

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The Okwapi has four stomachs. Bandande women must have a good six lungs.

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Their children, of course, cry in Kindande. As far as I have been able to find out, this is the worst language of the world to cry in.

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Often, in the afternoon, there is a truck approaching. The road is at six hours of march from our camp, and the path connecting the two would not

allow the passage of the most acrobatic tank. But the heavy, roaring truck approaches and never arrives.

Almost every evening an annoying telephone rings, rings furiously, not far away.

And a child, cruelly tortured on the top of the highest tree, intermittently screams in agony.

The last ray of the setting sun starts a colossal Diesel engine. The great metallic noise of rods and pistons goes on all night, stopping only when some huge giant of the forest cracks, cracks, and falls.

The first beams of the rising sun stops the engine and awakens a sentimental young mademoiselle, who at once begins to play a monotonous do-re-mi-fa-sol, slow, but clear and limpid, as if played with two fingers on a piano lacking the higher notes. Then quickly the notes descend, sol-fa-mi-re-do, as so many little crystal balls bouncing down a steel staircase. Then up again, slowly, persistently.

Imagination? No, certainly not. Isolated birds, couples of flying foxes, a world of unknown, hidden creatures, tribes of monkeys, multitudes of insects, every day, at the same hours, make these noises which I do not know how to describe otherwise, and many other sounds which I do not know how to describe at all. They are just some of the few definite, clear noises that, together with an infinite number of less distinguishable, form the overpowering, untiring, eternal voice of the forest.

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One does not need to be a particularly faithful Moslem in order to respect Islam, especially on Friday, it's sacred day. Saturday is the day of rest,

taught by the Seventh Day Adventist Missions. Sunday? Let's not even talk about it. One or two days a week one can be sick, no? Often one's father, or one of his several present and many ex-wives are gravely ill, usually dying. Or it might be some relative of the relatives of a relative. In any case, it is one's duty to go to their assistance. One's own wife may have run away, and one must take care of it. Not a sinecure, either, because women here seem essentially busy in running away and going to stay with another man, and always *pour la bonne raison*. This entails complicate discussions, the most elaborate exchanges of goats—the matrimonial currency—and long palavers before the chief, everybody trying to make the function last as long as possible, for while it lasts no one works—Q.E.D. When there is nothing else, one or the other of one's wives might be in a periodical moment of weakness and in need of rest, a rest which, according to tradition, the husband must take.

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All the rest of the time natives work. Uninterruptedly.

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Finally I persuaded Kalumé and Makulu-kulu to go with me to a place where, they told me, there are many Bongo. But it was so far, far away! *Kupoooooooooili*, they said. We went for two days into a part of the forest where I had never been before. Arrived at the *maye mukubwa*, the big river, we did not find a single Bongo foot-print, neither fresh nor old.



"They have all disappeared into the river," Kalumé assured me.

Yet he is not at all stupid, and the river is not three feet deep. I got mad. And so, what? Just two days' march to come back. I haven't been able to find out yet why the natives are so afraid of going on the track of Bongo. Must be some very strong superstition.

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*Mtembo* Camp is impossible. We never will be able to live here another month. Already we are not feeling so fit. I have decided to build a little house in *potopot* in a small clearing that we will have cut. Makulu-kulu says the best place to put it is "over that hill because it will be dry." Thank God for that!

The "hill" is half a mile away, invisible but to our feet, which feel a slight incline, while our eyes see only the level of vegetation in which we are buried up to our ears.

Anyway, Makulu-kulu must be right. To-morrow a hundred men will begin the work.

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Eric and Dennis are almost always away for one job or another. Ellen and I are always so busy with marches in the forest, writing, taking and developing photographs, and a million other things, that I needed a *kapita* to direct the work of the clearing and the house.

I found one, supposed to know everything about the work. "Basily," is what the natives have made of the name given to him by the mission fathers who

trained him. To-day he arrived in state, dressed in an old green hat, a beautiful new tuxedo coat and a pair of corduroy breeches. No shirt, socks or shoes, of course. He is as big and powerful as a gorilla, with the head of a brute but the eyes of a faithful dog. His arrival has made a great impression on our many natives. Even five women, very busily fighting, stopped the pandemonium, gasping in awe. Basily did not pay the slightest attention. His so haughty indifference was soon explained by the arrival of his wife. It is enough to look at her to know that the *menage* is well ruled. Gorilla or not gorilla, no monkey business there !

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Here, the very height of elegance for notables (*sultani, kapita*, prosperous *mfundi*) is to wear a tuxedo coat, even if it is the sole garment in evidence. They buy these coats at a Greek store in Beni for fifty francs. And the trousers, where are they all gone ? Has anybody found a tribe in some lost corner of Africa where all the "big shots" wear tuxedo trousers and no coats ?

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Having gone to Beni, I took a photograph of a Leopard-Man who had confessed some dozen of crimes. One of the Administrators did not look very pleased, and asked me not to publish the picture because the man had around his neck a long, light chain, attaching him to his bed.

The famous campaign against the "Belgian atrocities," made in particular by E. D. Morel and Sir Roger Casement, against Congo Independent State,

was so unjust and undeserved and so widely spread throughout the world that it has left a sort of inferiority complex in many Belgian officials. It is simply absurd. I have spent in Congo two years now, and two years previously. Never in the whole of Africa have I seen as conscientious, just and scrupulous officials as the Belgians, nor a population receiving a better or fairer treatment than the Congo natives. In the past there may have been some atrocities here, as everywhere else in Africa, and the culprits may have been Belgians as well as some of the many foreigners that King Leopold II took into the Congo service. But to-day the Belgians can only feel pride, and plenty of pride, in their Administration and its methods, and in their officials, so full of *feu sacré*.

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As for that Leopard-Man, the chain does not bother him in the least, but it gives a sense of security to his prison-mates, who would otherwise be frightened to death.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In April, 1935, an East African newspaper published an article stating that "the Ituri was so infested by ferocious Leopard-Men that it was dangerous to travel through it; and that if one was compelled to do so, he must go well armed and surrounded by every precaution."

At that time we had been in the Ituri a year, had made a total of 15,000 miles, either in groups or alone; in motor-cars, in tipoye or on foot; on the roads and in the forest. Furthermore, I had made an accurate study of the question. It was therefore with full first-hand knowledge that I was able to contradict these statements ("Life in the Ituri Forest," by A. Gatti, *African World*, London, N.1707, July 27th, 1935), and to affirm that never has any white man been disturbed in any way by the Leopard-Men.

In any case, the courageous and determined action of the Belgian authorities has completely stopped the activities of the secret societies in the Beni Territory, and since November, 1934, not one single crime has been committed.

Talking about atrocities, in Rwanda one day I watched an Administrator witnessing the morning appeal. Suddenly he picked out two men and, in a loud and fierce voice, ordered them to go away. They went, but quite unwillingly. That day, as many others, the A.T. had found his jail roll increased by volunteers, attracted by the abundant food, easy work and good treatment enjoyed by the prisoners.

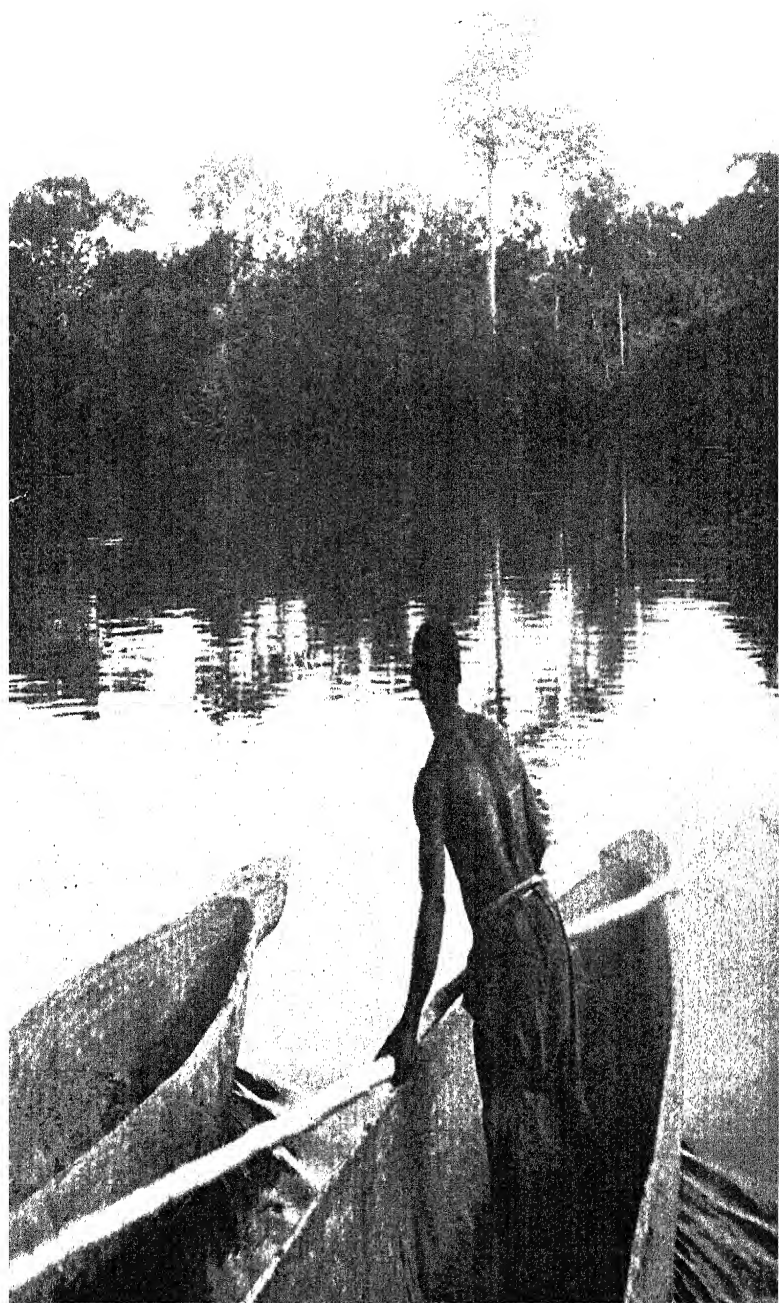
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Basily has made a small clearing on what Makuluku said was the top of a hill. (And it was, too.) Ellen and I went to measure off our future home of *potopot*. We marked down a room for her, another for me, both with small adjoining dressing-rooms; a dining-room, a bath-room, a dark-room and a store for food in tins and bottles. This side a little longer, that side a little wider—everything seemed so small, on the ground! And in the end the house measured sixty feet long and thirty feet wide. But there is such an abundance of wood, and *potopot* costs nothing, and this kind of house is built so quickly, that it does not matter. Basily says that in a month we can be in, and also another, smaller, house will be ready for Eric and Dennis.

That clown of Kaluèse and that gorilla of Basily, both dressed in the uniform of the boys of the expedition (blue fez and jersey and khaki shorts), are transformed in appearance and character. They work as hard as any natives I have ever seen, and are becoming quite attached to us. Now Kaluèse directs a hundred men to make the clearing. Basily another hundred, who cut the poles and prepare

[facing: A TINY MAMBUTI HUNTER REGALES  
ELLEN GATTI WITH A GOOD YARN





the vegetable rope and who will later build the house.

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There is an unwritten law by which never the pygmies of one *sultani* intrude in the territory of another. There are no visible borders, of course. Not even the *sultani* knows the immense forest territories nominally under his authority. But for the pygmies these borders, which they alone know, are sacred.

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Last night a devilish racket pulled us out of our sleep, of our little camp-beds, of our tents. The thick blackness surrounding our camp resounded with the most bloodcurdling shouts and cries. Something terrific, and mounting up continuously in an indescribable crescendo. Not one of our two hundred boys was in view. Just for fun, I fired a shot in the air, hoping the uproar would subside. But I didn't know the bad character of the forest chimpanzees yet. They grew even madder, more hysterical. Talk about the six lungs of the Bandande women !

Suddenly the hubbub stopped, leaving an almost painful silence weighing over us. A deep "uhù-uhù" of the leader, and all the band went away in a subdued rustling of leaves. Kaluèse, who had promptly appeared at the sound of my shot, said that there were at least sixty or seventy chimps in the herd.

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What? A horse? In the forest?

Yet the glimpse we had, showed us a horse, half

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[facing: THE WIDE, DEEP EPULU, A RIVER THAT  
NO OKWAPI COULD CROSS

hidden in the darkness of the vegetation, a smallish horse seen from behind, tail and everything. At our approach the horse straightened up, turned around, and displayed the bright, kindly face of Mrs. Kaluèse, welcoming Ellen with the most intimate “*Yambo, Maama yangu*” (Good day, my own mother).

“Mrs. Kaluèse,” as we amuse ourselves by calling her, is a pleasant devil, stark naked but for a little scrap of dark cloth stingily appearing in front and falling down in a long, thick streamer behind, which swishes back and forth as she moves in an exact imitation of a horse’s tail.

Bright Mrs. Kaluèse and glum Mrs. Basily have become bosom friends, keeping the other proletarian native women at a good distance. At least once a day they come to pay their respects to Ellen, and to inspect critically the work of their husbands.

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It is extraordinary how well Ellen gets along with the natives. She has learned their language, orders them around like nothing, and they all adore her. When I go into the forest, even for days on end, I leave her alone in camp, sure that she is safer and more protected among these cannibals of a few years ago, than in a great city among friends.

These primitive men, who consider their own wives as animals, have developed such a chivalry for their white *Maama* that, when I am down at the road in need of porters and cannot find them, I have only to say; “But Madame will have nothing to eat if you don’t carry these cases,” to get as many men as I want.

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It is *good*, in this life, to have a wife like that, adapting herself to such unusual conditions, swallowing every hardship and discomfort with a smile and plenty of humour, always ready for every kind of work, never desiring anything which we cannot have in this ascetic solitude, keeping a camp as smart as one could hope for, directing the kitchen so that, with almost nothing at disposal, we always have the best meals to be obtained in Congo ! It's a blessing. And what a curse could be any other kind of woman, especially here !

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Having to make a trip to Beni the other day, I met on the road a missionary, *en panne*, as is the common and continuous fate of motorists in Africa. He was a grand old-timer, and while we were having a bite of lunch together he told me this story.

Years ago he went far into the forest and managed to get on friendly terms with a tribe of pygmies, who had never seen a white man before. One of the things he tried to teach them, first of all, was cleanliness ; and certainly there was plenty of need. From the very first day the greatest success crowned his campaign. Having given a piece of washing soap to the pygmy chief, requests for soap began to pour in on him. So much so, that the only case of soap he had with him soon disappeared.

The good missionary, rubbing his hands with satisfaction, at once sent porters to the nearest post, two hundred miles away, to buy another case. When, finally, it arrived the missionary noticed casually that the new soap, instead of being white, as was the first, was of a dark blue colour, but of course he

didn't pay any attention to this detail and began again to distribute it.

But the requests of the pygmies quickly became fewer and fewer, and the poor father grew worried in seeing that all the enthusiasm for his teaching was dying away.

At last, one day, the old chief of the Mambuti presented himself.

"White man," he said, "all my men and our women and our children would like you to give us once more the first soap, for this is not good."

"How can it be not good?" marvelled the missionary. "Am I not using it myself every day?"

"Yes," answered the little man, "but, you see, as soon as we have eaten a piece of it we have big pains in the stomach. While the first soap, that was very good. We could eat it all at once, and not only it didn't hurt us, but we liked it better than the bananas and rats and snakes, better even than the salt."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### FURTHER WANDERINGS<sup>1</sup>

A MISSIONARY returning to America has sent us a pretty black cat and her offspring—the fruit of a little adventure the old girl had in the forest, evidently, for, small as it is, it looks exactly like a wild cat. Ellen is overcome with joy, because we are afflicted with rats and mice, too, now. The natives call the kitten “Pùssu-pùssu,” which is rather nice.

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Two hundred natives grouped by *fungu*<sup>2</sup>. Basily, *Kapita Mukubwa* (chief foreman), begins the evening appel. Near him are the baskets of dried beans and a mountain of bananas. Each man gets a big cup of the former, a dozen of the latter.

Basily shuffles his collection of old, oily bits of paper, looking for the pay-roll. He knows perfectly well where it is, hid among those pieces of old newspapers, garnered here and there, and pages of a Kiswahili Bible, souvenir of the mission. But before those two hundred faces, in awe at the sight of the *kapita*, who knows how to read almost like a white man, Basily cannot resist the temptation of making a complete show of his knowledge.

Finally the list is “found.”

<sup>1</sup> I hope nobody minds them.

<sup>2</sup> A *fungu* is a crew of men under the orders of a *kapita kidogo*, a small foreman.

"*Kapita Mukubwa* Basily," calls solemnly the resounding voice of *Kapita Makubwa* Basily.

"Yes-sar," answers, after an impressive pause, the same basso. A huge paw rises to the blue fez in a martial salute; an even huger smile of satisfaction cuts in two his heavy, prognathic snout of a good-natured gorilla.

"Aaah," murmur, and nod in approval, Kaluèse and all the *kapita kidogo*—Basily's general staff.

The big paw descends, grasps the cup, fills it twice with beans and pours them into the basket that Katariko, personal boy to the *Kapita Makubwa*, presents with religious care. On the top of the beans twenty-four bananas go, perhaps some more, nobody minding (I less than the natives) if the good, hard-working gorilla gets enough to fill up the depths of his capacious belly.

Normally, at this point, I arrive. Basily has had his great moment of the day. For the rest of the appel, I prefer to look myself.

"Kaluèse!"

"*Monssieux*," he answers, with all the French remaining to him from his three years of military service.

Then, one by one, I call the ten *kapita kidogo*. These are the men paid to jump on their *fungu* of workers and cover them with shouted encouragements, violent orders, terrific threats and formidable insults as soon as the white man approaches. And, as soon as the *Bwana* departs, to retire to a shady spot and share peacefully with the men such cigarette stubs as the *Bwana* has thrown away during his inspection, and as many pipes as the *fungu* can co-operatively afford.

The call of each name is promptly answered.

"*Musungu*"; "*Bwana*"; "*Sar*" (learned from our Uganda tent-boys); "*Baaba*"; "*Monssieux*" (copied from Kaluèse); "*Mundelè*" (taken from the Kasai chauffeur); "*Aksenti*" (thank you), says a very polite one. "*Miye iko*" (I am here), shouts one, full of importance. "*Mereci*," responds another polyglot.

The rosary of names, responses, cups of beans, bunches of bananas, goes on and on, until the last man, the silliest and weakest of all, "*Mbumbafu*."<sup>1</sup> This name, bestowed by me, is hailed with great laughter from the crowd, by a proud "*Yes, Bwana*" from the recipient, Ingimatato. "*Yes, Bwana, I am plenty mbumbafu*," he asserts with conviction. "*So give me a double ration, and I will become strong.*"

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"*Bwana*," Basily approaches me coyly. He wants very badly to ask me something. "How many goats did you pay to buy your wife? Kaluèse says two hundred. I say two thousand."

That deserved a cigarette.

"Madame is worth two hundred thousand," I said.

And Basily's "yes" is so sincerely happy that I give him the full package of Belga. But I imagine the faces of Ellen's family on seeing the procession of two hundred thousand beastly goats crossing the streets of Springfield, Missouri, trotting toward her home!

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A native of the plains around Lake Albert hunts

<sup>1</sup> Imbecile, weakling.

buffaloes in a very simple way. He approaches the animal so near as to be able to wound it with a poisoned arrow. Then he drops on the ground, as if he were dead, and remains there absolutely motionless, with eyes closed, holding his breath. The wounded buffalo charges, stops to examine the man, believes him to be dead, and goes off, only to come back at once. The man knows that the slightest movement or noise means an immediate end, and, trained as he is, remains there like a statue during three, four or sometimes five charges ; that is, until the poison kills the animal.

Simple, yes. But who, among us, would have so much nerve and courage ?

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Okwapi Camp No. 5, the last we have built in these weeks of *safari*. Camps No. 2 and No. 3 are on a line straight west of the old Camp No. 1. The last two are on another line going north-north-west from No. 3. Each camp a day of march from another. In every camp I have left a group of pygmies to look for tracks of a young, or of a mother Okwapi.

Kalumé has worked very hard and well. To-night, after my solitary dinner, I shouted to him, asking if he wanted some tea. I knew this would give him a lot of importance with his men. After ten minutes I shouted again, " Are you coming ? "

" Yes, yes, *Bwana*."

" But do you know what tea is ? "

" Yes, yes, *Bwana*," he answered from his hut.

Finally he emerged from the blackness.

" Well, where do you want me to pour it ? "

Shyly he presented the safest container he had been able to think of during those fifteen minutes of cerebral agony—a huge wicker basket.

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Coming back to the clearing, I found it quite enlarged. In the middle of it, something like the frame of a skyscraper. Basily had made a trifling error. The measure I gave him for the central poles to sustain the ridge of the sloping roof, he has used for the walls. And on that basis he has cut the necessary five or six hundred poles and already planted them in the ground. Either I order all these poles cut shorter, and hard as this wood is it will take a month, or I let them remain, and long as they are who knows the time it will take to cover them and fill the interstices with compressed mud.

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The men, now that they know us well and have seen that nothing happens to them in the famous *tabu* forest, are usually happy to come on *safari*, because there are less hours of work and more *matabisha*.

But to-day Kalumé had to run after them, one by one, to get together ten to accompany him, and the pygmies, on another Bongo expedition. I gave them food for fifteen days, salt, tobacco, machetes, and finally it seems they are happy and serious-minded this time. All my talks, my insults, my promises of big tips seem to have counteracted their superstitions and fears. As soon as they find some Bongo footprints, Makulu-kulu will come to fetch me.

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Makulu-kulu came back only two days after the Bongo party left. With him were Kalumé and his men, the pygmies and their wives, food, salt, tobacco, machetes. Why? Well, just scared out of their wits, all of them, and no one able to give me the slightest reasonable explanation. And all grey in the face, as if they had met a prehistoric monster. The best tail-between-the-legs outfit I ever saw.

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Eric and Dennis with the trucks have been making the *navette* between Kalumé Village and Beni for several days, as the long grass to thatch the roof of the house cannot be found near here. Every day a hundred women come from the road, hidden under huge sheaves of grass. Some carry babies, slung on their backs or sides. The first day they asked a spoonful of salt in payment. I gave them two, and three to those with children. The following day, all the women able to get hold of one, came up with a baby. Some of them, powerful as Normandy horses, appeared with a child on each side. And—logically—asked for four spoonfuls.

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A chicken is sold by the natives for one franc ; eggs, ten for a franc. And a franc is worth, say,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  English pennies or 3 cents of a dollar. Which is really nothing, when one thinks that though the eggs are microscopic, in ninety per cent. of the cases they are generously supplied with a chick, free of charge. And that while the chickens have practically no body at all, they are liberally embellished with plenty of feathers and the longest legs on record.

The only trouble is, that to make a decent meal



for four healthy people it takes an average of six chickens and four dozen eggs. And that even offering a double or triple price, we succeed in getting about two chickens and six eggs a week.

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Of course we tried to import from richer villages a collection of hens. But the leopards ate them all in two nights. Of course, also, we made traps to catch the leopards. I went myself several times to see that the traps were properly baited with live chickens which made enough commotion to attract all the leopards of the forest, it seemed to me. This isn't as bad as it sounds, for when the leopard gets inside the trap he finds he can't get at the chicken. However, the forest leopards had too much sense to investigate the traps; they contented themselves with sniffing around our tents and eating everything they could find in camp.

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To celebrate the completion of the roof, Dennis, with our ice-making hand-machine, prepared in great secrecy a chocolate ice-cream for the mess.

The intention was very thoughtful and kind, and we certainly appreciated it enormously.

As for the ice-cream, well, I wished the roof had never been completed.

. . . . .

As soon as our roof was finished, the "peechy-peechy" of our tents sent word to another happy couple to come and protect the new house. So now, between camp and clearing we have twelve faithful couples. They are the most attractive little beings.

And tame, and impudent and curious beyond words. Their name is African Pied Wagtails, I believe. But we call them "peechy-peechy" in imitation of the song with which they wake us in the morning as they run busily up and down the roofs of our tents. They come inside, during the day, to keep us company, hopping here and there, inspecting everything.

The natives have a nice name for them—"holi-holi"—and hold them sacred.

. . . . .

I remember that the Watussi have a real veneration for these little birds.

One of Rwanda's monarchs, a long, long time ago, was lovesick, and naturally the kingdom suffered. Although every princess of the surrounding countries had been offered to him, the young king could not find the girl of his dreams.

The *holi-holi*, inquisitive as always, knew the whole story, of course. One of the birds, one day, saw the prettiest Butussi girl of the whole world. He was in the best position to judge, because she was just emerging from a little crystalline pool where she had bathed. So the *holi-holi* had an inspiration. Before the girl could reach it, he took up in his beak her one garment and flew away. The beautiful virgin began to follow him, enjoying the joke.

"*Holi-holi*, give me my robe!"

"Peechy-peechy," he would reply.

Then he would take up again the white toga, and fly a little farther.

The next thing the girl knew was that an extremely handsome giant was looking at her with passionate eyes.

"Peechy-peechey," said the bird, dropping the virgin's garment on the king's shoulder.

"I will give it to you, if you will marry me," said Rwanda's Lord, who had finally found his true love.

And the virgin—well, what could a virgin do in such circumstances?

Thinking of what his wife would say if he remained much longer on the scene, "Peechy-peechey," said the *holi-holi*, and modestly flew away home.

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In a few months, the continuous example of our orderly, hard-working life, and the effect of plenty of food, disciplined work and good treatment, have transformed our men from the wild specimens of undernourished, primitive, miserable beings we found on arriving into happy, strong, quite intelligent natives who pay their governmental tax, have no worries, show initiative and goodwill and feel some sense of dignity. The trouble now is not to find workers, but to persuade those whom we no longer need to go away.<sup>1</sup>

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Eric has made a new Bongo *safari* in another part of the forest, in the territory of Moera. When he does something, he doesn't sleep on it. I never had in any of my previous expeditions a more conscientious, untiring, intelligent and disciplined companion. And when he came back empty-handed after two weeks of hard work, I was satisfied that

<sup>1</sup> Although usually a native, when he has worked for some months, grows tired of it and prefers to live in idleness for the rest of the year on the little money he has earned, the greater part of our boys never left us, worked steadily for two years, and were very sad when we went away and had to dismiss them all.

even in Moera's territory the Bongo are *tabu*. (I am sorry to use this word "*tabu*" so often ; but I am even sorrier to have learned so well what it means, and to be faced with that meaning every day.)

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In our work we meet continuously so many officials. Some of them are kind, others are hospitable, many are pleasant, others again extremely helpful and obliging. But in Irumu there is a Post Master, Mr. Capron, who combines all these good qualities, and is in addition a very interesting, cultivated person to talk with ; in short, a man not to be found easily in Congo or anywhere else. Madame Capron is just what his wife ought to be. And to both of them we have become deeply devoted.

With post office and bank and the nearest market for food supplies at one day march plus 104 kilometres distance, we couldn't hold out for a long time here without the blessing of the Caprons in Irumu. As by magic, the mail reaches us even when we are far away on *safari* ; the telegrams and letters we send from camp infallibly catch the first air mail or the first radio-wave. Butter, flour, vegetables, fruits, books, newspapers, and whatever else we need, they send us. To-day, at our request, even two pair of thoroughbred rabbits arrived.

Dennis, the only one who knows something about rabbit-culture, has built a model cage and says that in some weeks not only will we have rabbits to eat every day, but we will not know what to do with the surplus.

And Ellen, when the first piece of ground was cleared of stumps, made a garden.

So our food problem is near solution. And it's time, too, for we have nearly exhausted all we brought from England, America and Italy.

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From the white man's point of view, the pygmies are the most cruel little creatures. One cannot really blame them, for they are entirely unconscious of their own brutality. They take a crab from the river and indifferently break off one by one all its legs, carefully packing them with the animal still alive in a *magongo* leaf. They wound a monkey and put it to roast on a fire before it is dead. They plunge a dozen spears in the body of an elephant and then let it bleed slowly to death.

I tried to talk this out with Makulu-kulu, but he, and his subjects, took it as a great joke. When he saw that I was talking seriously, he said: "But don't you cut the flowers from a green plant, and make fire with wood not yet dead, and cut down trees? Yet, they are alive, too."

He was utterly sincere in what he said. And I was utterly sincere, also, in feeling like a fool.

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Okwapi Camp No. 6 (a day of march beyond No. 5 and in the same direction). Last night I arrived here completely finished. As soon as my small Whimper tent was up, I went to bed. I had been asleep less than an hour when there began the worst series of storms I ever saw. My tent shook like the leaves in which it was buried. The rain, sometimes, seemed to perforate the valiant canvas as so many spears. Before every new storm, animals, mysterious and unrecognisable in the darkness,

brushed against the canvas walls. Each time I lit the torch, outside the mosquito-net door I could see the light reflected by a pair of eyes, vanishing at once. Three time elephants blindly rushing away stumbled over the ropes of the tent, snapping them, while the whole tent seemed to jump in the air. I never heard so many strange noises. And such ear-splitting crackings of lightning, and huge trees falling near at hand. Such a commotion that I remained sitting on my bed, the rifle in one hand, the torch in the other.

Every good explorer, hunter and traveller must say, sometimes, with a becoming modesty that hopes to deceive nobody, that he was scared. My word, I *was* scared, without any modesty. What can one do, at night, in such a general pandemonium, against the claws of a leopard or some tons of elephant, or some dozens of tons of mahogany?

The worst of it was that I didn't have even the sense of company, of protection—as stupid and illogical as it may be—that on a night like this is given by the propinquity of a score of natives and pygmies. There was such a smell in their camp that I had had my tent pitched at a good 300 yards' distance.

This morning we found tracks of leopards, elephants, buffaloes, antelopes, even one of Okwapi, surrounding my tent.

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I discovered what the smell in camp was. The pygmies, scouting the country, had found an elephant dead since a number of days and brought back big pieces of it which they hid—of all places—

inside the huts that their wives had immediately built.

"But how can you eat such a horribly-smelling thing?" I asked a merry little fellow gorging himself by his tiny fire.

He gave me a pitying smile. "I eat the meat, not the smell, *Bwana*," he said, as he reached for a second helping.

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Back to base camp, I found the clearing and Ellen's garden much enlarged, and nearly two hundred men busy at the hopeless task of filling up the skeleton of the house with *potopot*. When will the house be finished? After our return to Europe, perhaps. Anyway, no earthquake will ever be able to move it an inch.

Ellen is worried. She had heard that no garden will grow in the forest unless the ground is thoroughly fertilised. Therefore, she has planted also some hundreds of papaya, bananas and pineapples. If there is a disaster, let it be a wholesale one (feminine logic).

Now the need of fertiliser is even greater. Where are we going to get it?

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Night brings counsel. Elephants and buffaloes bring fertilizer in plenty all around here. Twenty men were dispatched this morning to collect as much as possible. Great Mother Forest looks after her little white children, too, occasionally.

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Talking about the strange noises, I forgot the 'plane, the slow, huge, heavy aeroplane. It has no

fixed hours, but when it arrives its noise fills up all the camp. Then one hears a big bang against a tent, or feels it against his own body. And he finds that the 'plane was a Goliath Beetle, a ponderous object four inches long and two wide, covered with a cuirass enamelled in white and brown.

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At lunch, Ellen said that to have a bit of fun and some social life she would, one of these days, invite "the girls"—Mrs. Kaluèse and Mrs. Basily—to tea. Eric gave her a wary look and remained non-committal. But Denis took her seriously, and his shocked expression cheered us up for the rest of the day.

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The more one gets to know the forest, the more one finds it full of curious phenomena. Yesterday, out with the pygmies, we came to a place where I felt suddenly a queer sensation of emptiness, of something unnatural. I tried to get some information from the pygmies.

"Wait awhile, *Bwana*," said old Sorosoro.

As soon as the sun appeared, the answer came. The air began to vibrate with such a shrill, continuous, strenuous noise that I felt my ear-drums almost pierced. I had to cover them with my hands, imitating the pygmies, and we all ran away at top speed. The zone was thickly populated by Cicada, and their metallic vibrations, lasting the whole day, are so powerful that not even the other insects can stand them, and all animal life is driven away.

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Last Sunday when I wanted to stop and make



camp, the pygmies insisted on a certain point, saying that there we would not be disturbed by rain.

For a week now, we have had from three to five formidable hurricanes every day. Over our heads thunder and lightning exploded, low, heavy, black clouds galloped, for the greater part of the day and night, and cataracts of rain fell almost continuously all around us. But in an irregular circle of about a hundred yards, in the middle of which is our camp, not a drop of rain fell. Why? The pygmies say that all the year long it is the same thing. The reason, according to them, is that a spirit, of the good sort, lives there, and doesn't like to be wet because another spirit, of the bad sort (his wife, naturally) has gone away with all his blankets.

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Nights are cold and damp.

The Beni Mission kindly sent us an *mfundi* supposed to be able to make a fire-place in each of our rooms. He has worked a month now, with six men. So that the chimneys should not pass through the grass roof, he has invented a system of pipes made of petrol tins which connect with big petrol drums perched on the tops of stone towers resembling the Zimbabwe architecture.

To-day the rain was so bad and insistent that we built two big fires, hoping to dry out the *potopot* a little. The *mfundi's* idea, however, is that the chimneys are ornaments and all the smoke should come out from the fire-places themselves. We had to run out, choking and coughing, just in time to see the two towers crumble down, melted by the rain.

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Eric has come back from another Bongo expedition, which left from the village of *Sultani* Mutoni (km. 32 from Irumu). Once more, a complete blank. Is the Bongo, in this part of the country, just a myth?

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The clearing, after five months of work, is completed. A little wider here, a little longer there, and we have succeeded in making it about six hundred feet by four hundred feet. Anyway, this will keep off insects and animals.

The house is far from being finished. But, having transported the whole camp to the clearing, we already feel like millionaires.

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Pùssu-pùssu is growing up under one's eyes. He is already much larger than his mother. And also, at moments, much more expansive, at others much wilder. He is really a beautiful creature with all the markings and attitudes of his wild father. The rabbits, instead, are always the same. They squeak all night as if they were forty, not four. And during the day they continually escape from their corral, provoking the most excited and noisy pursuits.

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Ellen's garden gives already strawberries, tomatoes, cucumbers, peas, lettuce, celery, beans, egg-plant, carrots, radishes, endive, beets, onions, potatoes and corn. With true feminine perversity, she finds her greatest interest and pride in some miserable shoots of green supposed to be lemon, orange and mango trees, and which will bear fruit, if ever, years after we have gone.

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Our bath-room is ready. Lavabo and tub, both with running cold and hot water. More than one could find in Beni or Irumu. Tub and lavabo we got from Kenya ; two ex-petrol drums outside the house, one over a rudimentary furnace, both connected with rubber pipe and taps providentially brought from London, did the trick.

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And the furniture for the house ! All made with Shell boxes. But we assembled and connected them in the most modernistic lines, and painted them in black, red and aluminium. First-class effect. Ellen, however, protests that the Shell Company should make their cases of ebony, mahogany and rosewood.

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To take other photographs, I tried to approach an Okwapi, wrapping myself up completely with branches and advancing against the wind, inch by inch. I succeeded in approaching the unsuspecting animal at the right distance. Just in that very minute, hundreds of red ants which had slipped under my clothing began, with perfect synchronism, to bite, as is their pleasing custom. Automatically, the camera jumped away in one direction, the Okwapi in another, and I in a third, in top gear, to go and submerge myself in the nearest stream.

The stream I found readily enough.

The Okwapi, of course, had disappeared, and was probably already some miles away.

But the camera ! It took me an hour to find it, hidden as it was in a hole, deep in a bed of leaves. And it was my best Leica !

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My wife and I are both equipped with a Leica. These little cameras have done miracles during the whole expedition. When all the other cameras were more or less incapacitated through humidity and rust, the always smart, shining Leicas never missed a shot. Yet we never took the other cameras into the forest, as they were either too heavy or too slow or too cumbersome. As for sharpness and luminosity of lens, perfect quality of negatives, facility of tank development, and good result in enlargements, we found the Leica not only unbeatable, but the only camera usable in the difficult conditions of the forest.

I couldn't suggest anything better or more practical, and I do so because during this expedition only we took over five thousand photographs with our Leicas, and they were all good.

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An extremely useful, really indispensable Leica gadget proved to be the indirect view-finder, which allows one to take pictures of even the shyest of natives in their most unsuspecting and natural attitudes, as this clever view-finder makes them believe that one is snapping something else in a completely different direction.

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A great day. The house is inaugurated. Now we will be able to live decently, to work comfortably, and to recover promptly when we come back from a long *safari*.

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And the two couples of rabbits have simultaneously

given birth to I don't know how many dozens of little ones. The food problem is solved.

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And the whole ceiling of Ellen's room has crumbled down. About a ton of *potopot* as hard as stone. Fortunately, Ellen was out of the house at the time. We all go back to the tents to wait for the boys to tear down those murderous ceilings and make new ones of reeds. Let's hope they will be ready before we leave for home.

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And the old rabbits, Dennis says, have already eaten up all their first production. Some fluffy hair flying around, and a satisfied smirk on the stupid faces of those inhuman parents are all that remains of our great hopes.

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And a leopard has taken the last three chickens, just from behind the kitchen, the cook comes indignantly to announce before we go to bed.

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And the four old rabbits are dead. Of indigestion, I hope. It has been a great day.

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At early morning, or on a moonlit night, this clearing takes a fantastic appearance, so wonderful that one never tires to contemplate it. It is surrounded by a luminous mother-of-pearl mist, against which the colossal trees enclosing the clearing as a wall design exquisite black laces. Other trees behind them appear as ghosts, and melt in the distance into

a milkish atmosphere in which we seem to be suspended as if on the top of a high mountain at the end of the world. One murmurs: "But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground."

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Elephants crash in a meander of the Sambuku at a hundred yards from the clearing. A golden colobus wakes from a frightening dream and cries pitifully high over our heads, joined and comforted by the croaking of his brothers. Far away a leopard makes a love serenade to his mate or sings his victory over the blood of his prey. Hooves hammer on the hard-packed ground at the lower end of the clearing—a buffalo, in an excess of confidence, gallops through the unexpected open space. From far, far away a light breeze carries to us, delicately packed in a misty cotton-wool, the sound of Kalumé's tom-toms.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### THE CAPTURE OF A YOUNG OKWAPI

A HISSING sound as vicious as that of ten enraged cats, a human moan of frantic pain issuing from beneath a large bush thickly covered with thin, flat leaves as large as shields. The hoarse cry of Makulukulu, who had instantly thrown his short spear. Tiny brown bodies appearing from every clump of vegetation and running pell-mell to the chief. A rain of spears and arrows projected toward the spot from which that moan had come. Then the two sounds repeated again, but this time with a reverse of tone, the moan transmuted to a hiss, the hiss to a moan.

Only a few seconds, and the little scene is ended. The oppressive silence falls once more over the forest. And silence reclaims the pygmies, who in the forest never speak aloud, murmur solely when indispensable, and shout only when death suddenly leaps at them from one of the thousand ambushes in which it lays in wait.

Now, without a word, from beneath that thick-leaved bush a Mambuti slowly crawled. Only his eyes, shining with the wild light of an infuriated animal, and his shoulder striped with blood, told of the embrace from which he had just escaped. His face was set in its usual stoical lines, his movements were slow, absolutely matter-of-fact, as, helped

by the others, he dragged out from the bush the enormous leopard which had attacked him.

Nine feet long from head to tail—twice the stature of the pygmy—the leopard seemed now a grotesque sort of porcupine, with all those spears and arrows bristling on his back and sides. How the pygmies had dared to throw their poisoned weapons at the animal without fearing to hit their companion pinned beneath it, both invisible in the dark vegetation; how one of the arrows had been able to strike the leopard in the spine causing instant death, were things that only Muungu, the great god, might have explained.

And only Muungu could have told what had become of the little Okwapi which in the midst of that pandemonium had darted out from his hiding place and galloped away at the heels of his mother, unobserved, and paying no attention either to the pygmies or the leopard, that in unconscious competition had been attempting to get him.

Evidently the huge feline when he had noticed the intruders had decided that one of their party could take the place of the small Okwapi which he had been watching so long and which, in all probability, was now lost to him. And he had jumped upon the first pygmy who, ignorant of the danger, had crouched down under a bush near him.

But the intruders had won, and now with quick and well-co-ordinated movements they were already skinning and cutting in pieces the prey whose flesh is so appetizing to them, however uneatable it appears to us.

In the greedy job of dividing the flesh, the Mambuti had already completely forgotten the risk they had



run, and even the state of their companion, whose wounds continued to bleed copiously and unheeded. As for all the days spent in marching through the forest to find the tracks of a female Okwapi, then to select the footprints of a mother and to follow them to the distant hiding place where she had left her young ; as for my orders, my recommendations, my promises of salt and cloth and other things which for them are great treasures—all this had disappeared entirely from their childish minds before the dazzlement of the approaching banquet.

The cause of the mishap was the *mfundi*, the native hunter whom I had put at the head of the little group of pygmies. Had he followed my order, as soon as the good track was picked up he would have continued to follow it with the pygmies, sending immediately one of them to call me. I would have come at once, and even if the episode of the leopard had then occurred, I could have ended it with a rifle shot while the *mfundi* and the Mambuti barred the way of the young Okwapi.

But the hunter had been transported by enthusiasm, had followed the track to the end, and only when he had seen the mother disappear into the nest and thought that the affair had become too serious for him to handle alone, did he decide to come himself to call me. Too late. And now the small Okwapi was far away, lost in the maze of the forest, and I must begin the search for another in that immense obscurity.

Okwapi being so numerous, although females never have more than one offspring at a time, and if one believes the pygmies bear only once every four or five years, still there are many young. The trouble

is to find them. The observations made during so many months showed me that when a female Okwapi is nearing the time when she will give birth to her young, she searches until she finds a place where the vegetation is so over-abundant and firmly inter-twisted that only she, with her extraordinary strength and the protection afforded by the exceptional thickness of her skin, can slowly open through it a narrow zigzagging passage. Reaching the centre, usually in a spot slightly more elevated and well protected above by interlaced branches, she lashes out with her heels, and butts and rams with her head until she clears a small space, a sort of cave in the thick vegetation. There she will bring forth her child. There the little one will remain in safety for the entire period of nursing and until it is strong and big enough to follow her in her continuous wanderings and learn from her how to overcome all the difficulties and dangers of the forest.

And during this period—three or four months—the mother leaves the hiding place each morning and returns only in the evening, sure that no harm will meanwhile come to her progeny, for no animal in the forest will enter that cave. Not even the leopard, the only carnivora who preys upon young Okwapi, for with his thin skin he fears the narrow thorny corridor, and will spend whole days in ambush near the entrance in the vague hope that the little one, in an excess of disobedience, will by chance come out for a moment. When the mother returns, the leopard quietly retires to a prudent distance, where he remains as long as she is within. For even the enormous, cruel leopard of the forest has a holy terror of the rage of an adult Okwapi.

The strength and stubbornness of the adult Okwapi, fully confirmed for me by my experience with "Beautiful," had brought me to the conclusion that it would be much easier to capture, transport and tame a young specimen. But there was practically no hope of getting one in a *zemu*, as it would never be out from its hiding place until nearly full grown, and then, for the few months it would remain with the mother, it would always travel behind her, hence she<sup>er</sup> would be the one to be entrapped.

So, I had decided that the only thing to do was to find a hiding place and take the young one there. And so, my *mfundi* having failed me, I had now to try another plan of campaign.

The necessary preparations having been made, one morning I started what seemed to me to be the only possible experiment. Eight patrols, each composed of a *mfundi* and some pygmies, and supplied with a canvas bag and ropes, left the base camp; each group, taking the direction I had indicated to it by the aid of the sun, to search the forest for one of the mysterious hiding places of the young Okwapi. Three or four pygmy women followed every group, wives unbelievably loaded with bananas and maize, each woman armed with the inevitable burning faggot—the pygmy's much more cumbersome, but also much safer, correspondent of our cigarette lighters. Good to light the green leaves of wild tobacco in their long pipes, as to kindle the little fire which the Mambuti make to counteract the intense humidity of the forest every time they stop, even for a few minutes.

Half an hour after all the groups had, as I thought, left, an animated voice reached me from the group

of small, characteristic half-huts at the edges of our clearing which I had believed to be deserted.

Squatted on the ground there I found, not without surprise, Makulu-kulu, whom I had supposed to be already quite far on his way. But there he was, and so deeply engrossed in the vivacious speech he was making that he did not even interrupt it at my arrival. He merely gave me a quick glance, accompanied by an even quicker raising of his eyebrows and a heavy sigh. Eloquently indicating that he was extremely busy. And his soliloquy flowed on.

"Muungu, muungu," I was able to extract from his torrent of words, "have I not made you rich offers?"

With his tiny, beautifully-shaped hands, Makulu-kulu, whose least preoccupation in this world certainly is cleanliness, was now carefully brushing the ground around a minute construction of sticks planted in the form of arches and covered with leaves.

"Muungu," he was saying, turning toward the primitive little temple, "here there is a bone of the last elephant and one of the last leopard my spear has killed. All covered with beautiful rich meat. And here there is a leaf with a big piece of banana. And here an ant heap full of good fat white ants. Now, protect me, oh, Muungu!"

To say the truth, had the spirit taken the trouble of looking closely as I did he would have noticed that the ant heap was full, yes, of ants. But the leaf showed only the empty skin of the banana. And from the black, shining bones the filed teeth of Makulu-kulu must have removed the last smell of meat several weeks before. But Muungu, the great spirit who created the Mambuti and died, long long

ago, is not of such a sordid nature as to notice these petty details.

And the little *sultani*, who being also the witch doctor of his tribe was expert in such matters, continued his invocation in a crescendo of entreaty.

"Protect me, Muungu. Make me find the little Okwapi—little, little, *little* !—that the *Bwana* wants."

The gesture accompanying the words indicated an Okwapi of the maximum stature of a cat, but with a confidential wink, Makulu-kulu let me know that this was merely a small innocent trick to make the spirit swallow the pill easily.

"When I find them, the *Bwana* will give me many presents, oh, Muungu. And of all of them I will give you a part as an offering. What will Makulu-kulu receive? Salt as much as that. *Tumbako* as much as this. And many francs. And a pipe like the one of the *Bwana*. And a 'bi-lan-ketty,' which keeps one so warm at night."

Here another wink to me. Obviously, this time I was the one to swallow the pill.

And before I could have the slightest opportunity of suggesting that I had never promised him the blanket and the pipe, he got up.

"*Bwana*," came a deep base voice from the region of my belt. "*Now*, in less than a week you will find the Okwapi."

And sure that I had well understood all the implications and inferences of that "*now*," away he went, strutting importantly and determinedly, gesticulating more than ever, to join his subjects, meanwhile continuing his sprightly conversation with the great Muungu.

Only four days later Makulu-kulu sent for me.

Among the thousand tracks of Okwapi that honeycomb the forest in every direction, he had found one which he declared to be a female, and which he judged to be a mother, as in the same day the tracks doubled back. And he was right. The footprints followed by the pygmies with indescribable patience and ability disappeared into a tangle of vegetation from which every now and then could be heard the slight rustlings as of a big animal moving in its nest.

During all the night the *mfundi* and the pygmies remained hidden not far away, quiet and silent as shadows, huddled closely together against the danger of leopards, awaiting for dawn and for the signal of the "falling tree."

For I had discovered that the Okwapi, so courageous in front of any other danger, through instinct fears the fall of the great giants of the forest, against which no strength nor courage can prevail. And that it is enough to simulate the noise of a falling tree to make any Okwapi run precipitously away in the opposite direction.

Half a dozen fair-sized dry branches suddenly cracked in slow succession, and another six or seven cracked more rapidly, while one brushes with a slow, regular crescendo a leafy branch over the leaves of a bush, can decently do for the purpose. Both the hunters and the pygmies had welcomed this simple idea with great enthusiasm, and had practised it for days.

That is why, that morning, near our group, at the first light of dawn a huge tree began to give the slow, regular, creaking sounds known to all the forest to presage its fall.

So, at least, thought the Okwapi mother. For

[facing: "MUUNGU, MUUNGU," I FOUND HIM  
MURMURING AT THE LITTLE TEMPLE







even before the brushing of leaves began, out she darted from the hiding place.

And so must have thought the small one, who hesitated a second, then slowly followed her on his first venture from the dark, well-protected, green cavern.

And before the baby Okwapi could recover from the surprise which had stopped him short before those small, black, unknown beings who had appeared all around him, the pygmies had enveloped him in a bag. With only a wild display of resistance, a mere matter of principle apparently, he found himself fastened securely in the bag, which was tied to a long pole and hoisted to the shoulders of four pygmies.

A few hours of march across the forest and he reached our base camp, triumphantly received by all, whites and blacks.

A new task, however, was beginning, far more pleasant for me than the first, but no less difficult—that of accustoming the beautiful little animal to love man and have full confidence in him, to forget the warm milk of his mother for the nourishment that could be provided for him in captivity; and of training and preparing him for the long journey of many hours' trip by porters through the forest from the camp to the road, of many days by motor car to the coast, and many weeks by boat to Europe.

For Makulu-kulu, instead, the job was done, and I was quite curious to see how he would fulfill his promises to the spirit who had favoured him so well.

“Muungu, Muungu,” I found him murmuring at the little temple, surrounded by all the presents I had just given him. “Listen to me, Muungu, and

S

[*facing*: “BWANA, NOW IN LESS THAN A  
WEEK YOU WILL FIND THE OKWAPI”

give me counsel. Of course the salt goes to the wives, and you know what a shouting they would do if I took a little of it. You, who know women, well realise it. Of tobacco, I would give you some, but the ants would eat it, and so none would remain for you, anyway. The pipe"—he paused and scratched his nose thoughtfully—"if you smoke it, I cannot smoke it. But if I smoke it, you will certainly be glad that Makulu-kulu, your faithful son, has in his mouth a pipe as beautiful as the one of the *Bwana*. There is the 'bi-lan-ketty,' new and warm and fine. But it is so small for such a big god as you. Listen, Muungu," he concluded, collecting all his goods, "the first time I will kill an animal I will give you two huge bones, one for the animal, one for the Okwapi you have made me find."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### TOTO'S LIFE IN CAMP

THE arrival of Toto, as the natives at once began to call the little Okwapi, at our base camp was a great occasion.

The joy of my companions, after so many disappointments, at once manifested itself in a hundred little attentions. Between a caress and an affectionate word, they got him out from the bag and extricated him from the tangle of ropes, while I tried in every way to quiet the natives of our camp who, good devils that they are, seemed to have become mad with excitement at our success, and all around us shouted at the top of their lungs.

Toto, however, if he was alarmed at all these unusual noises, was too much of a born gentleman to show any emotion. He rested for a few minutes on the ground, very sensibly, and then got up on his long legs and looked about him. At the natives he merely threw an indifferent glance of his rotating eyes. He projected a good foot of tongue to dismiss a fly from the top of his head, and, that little matter attended to, began to walk slowly toward me. When he reached me, he laid his head, full of confidence on my arm.

This was the beginning of Toto's life among civilised people, and the beginning of my career as an Okwapi "mother."

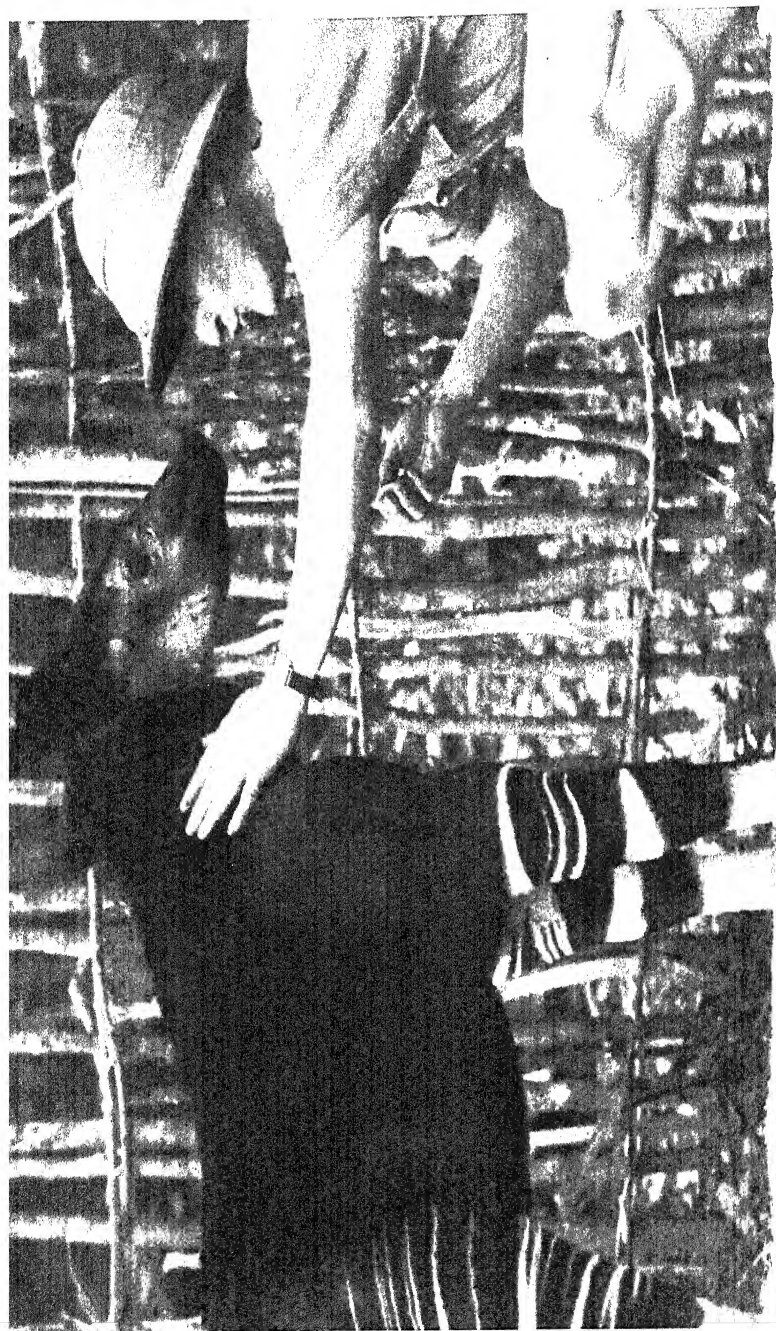
In a corner of the clearing, I had built some time previously a good hut of poles and leaves, from which ran a palisade of irregular form entering the surrounding forest and enclosing a piece of uncleared ground where in abundance grew the leaves the Okwapi eats.

For two or three days Toto seemed to be very satisfied with his little domain, and passed his time in exploring every corner of it. Then he grew bored, and began to wait each day almost at the same hour of the morning at the little gate through which he saw us enter and leave the palisade. I tried to let him come out and wander all over the camp, and this appeared to be a great joy to him, if I can judge by the trouble we had in persuading him to return to his palisade. Kaluèse, whom I had made his official guard, always followed on one side, I on the other. But Toto was absolutely free to go where he wanted and to do what he liked. At once he showed a deep preference for the spots where the ropes of our tents were most numerous and intricate, a condition which probably recalled to his instinct the lianas of the forest. It was most amusing to watch him negotiate the ropes with those thick, woodenish legs and those diminutive hooves still hidden by hair, which gave him the appearance of a big automatic toy, every movement so deliberate and gradual, but always perfectly sure and exact.

The sweetness which these animals have in youth, now and then charmingly interrupted by a flash in miniature of the obstinacy so strong in the adult ; their quiet and dignified seriousness ; the grace of their curious lines ; the beauty of their asymmetrical white, black and brown markings ; the immaculate,

[*facing*: THE ARRIVAL OF TOTO AT OUR BASE  
CAMP WAS A GREAT OCCASION





shining state in which they keep their fine coats ; the absent-minded deliberateness of every movement, and the nonchalant air with which they regard any animal not of their species, large or small as it may be, are attractions of which one cannot tire.

When Toto, spreading his front legs giraffe-like, drank ; or when, lying on the ground, he turned a neck that seemed to be made of indiarubber and rested his head on his thigh, or even on his tail ; or, turning his head in every direction, he threw out his never-ending blue tongue to scare away a fly that had poised itself in the most inaccessible spot or to wash his big revolving eyes, he was always irresistible. More than ever, when something went contrary to his desires. For then he threw up his head and stamped spiritedly on the ground with a front leg, kept very rigid and lifted well high. This, which appeared to be the one quick and sudden movement he knew how to make, and which clearly expressed his impatience, was the most delightful movement I have ever seen in an animal.

Naturally, the question which preoccupied me for the first days was that of nourishment. A mother Okwapi never having been captured alive, nor, as far as I know, ever having been examined immediately after death, I could not have the slightest idea of the quality and quantity of the milk which Toto was accustomed to receive each day. Nor could anybody else on earth give me this information.

Furthermore, I had to exclude the possibility of having fresh cow's milk on the spot or of receiving it each day from some other place, as it is the general opinion that cattle cannot live in the forest because of the tsetse fly, and in any case they cannot be

found nearer to our camp than Irumu. It remained, therefore, for me to try the milk of the two goats which I had already bought in preparation for the capture.

To induce Toto to take his first bottle, no less than three persons were required : one to prevent him from pulling back, one to hold his head, and the third to give the bottle. But soon he began to suck by himself, and the operation, repeated three times a day, became a simple matter which I was able to handle easily by myself.

However, goat's milk did not seem to agree with the constitution and the tastes of the little Okwapi, and after a week or so he became perfectly disgusted with it. And he must have felt quite keenly the lack of his warm, natural source of nourishment, for, turning away from his bottle, he continually nuzzled his head against us, seeking the consoling contact of his mother.

Although without much hope, I therefore determined to risk getting a cow in the forest, hoping also that some sort of friendship would develop whereby Toto could have not only the necessary milk but a good, warm companion during the night.

This experiment, however, was not very fortunate, and the only result it yielded was to give us another instance of the innate coolness and courage of the Okwapi.

We bought a cow near Irumu, transported it in one of our trucks, and laboriously drove it across the forest to our camp, often being obliged to have the calf carried ahead by a native to persuade the recalcitrant mother to continue her so unusual and little-liked journey.



Once introduced into the palisade, the ponderous African cow, with her long, curved, wicked horns, stood for a moment towering over the insignificant creature at least ten times smaller and lighter than herself. Then she seemed to realise that this tiny animal she was facing was about to usurp the place of her own calf, and without warning she charged. Only by a miracle I succeeded in diverting the aim of her horns. But the brave little Toto had awaited the disproportionate attack without moving an inch and with an air of the greatest indifference, following the tradition of his elders who, according to the natives, sometimes in the heart of the forest challenge and vanquish the truculent buffalo.

Clouds of flies, among which I noticed many tsetse absolutely unusual in our clearing, soon gathered around the cow and her calf, so that under the obvious impossibility of keeping them in good health for any length of time in the forest, I preferred to send them away before accustoming the Okwapi to a new milk on which I could not continue to keep him.

The experiences made then and later have brought me to the conclusion that continuous change of milk being dangerous, and the milk of the native goats being very variable, often infected, and always distasteful to the Okwapi, the best nourishment for a young one not yet weaned is natural cow's milk, pasteurized, in tins of some good reliable brand. There is also the great advantage that the animal can be kept on this nourishment throughout the long trip to Europe and as long as milk is required for him after his arrival there.

But for Toto, at least for the first weeks of his life

in captivity, such milk was out of the question, as we could not find one single tin either in Beni or Irumu, and to get it from Stanleyville would have taken at least a month.

Of course it occurred to me that the safest way of bringing a young Okwapi out of Africa would be to accustom him to eat leaves. Not the forest leaves, which he eats naturally, as one could not have a fresh supply of them for the whole journey, but vegetables easy to grow in Africa and to find both on board ship and later at the Zoo.

Leaves of this kind, such as turnips, lettuce, potatoes, cabbage, we already had in abundance in my wife's garden. But I was soon to learn how much patience and what an amount of time it takes to get a young Okwapi over this change of diet.

As a matter of fact, my problem at the start was even more complicate, as Toto was so young that he did not know as yet many other things which, had he remained in the forest, he would have learned naturally—to drink, to find and lick saliferous substances, to jump ditches and trunks, to pass under big lianas and thick bushes, and so on.

But how to teach him at least the most indispensable of these things? Particularly, how to teach him to eat?

My companions knew as much as I did: that is, very little. The pygmies, at my questions, replied only by shouts of laughter, believing it just a great joke that a *Bwana* would take so much trouble for an animal which, for them, was nothing but a potential steak.

So I had to manage in some way; and the way I chose, of constituting myself a sort of

[*facing*: TO INDUCE TOTO TO TAKE HIS FIRST BOTTLE,  
THREE PERSONS WERE REQUIRED





Okwapi-mother and teaching Toto, through object lessons all that I could, was very probably quite absurd, but wholly enjoyable for me, fond, as I was, of my little pupil.

I began by taking some leaves of lettuce and going to sit down beside Toto in the seclusion of his hut. He smelled me well all over, looked at me from every possible angle, then, evidently satisfied with the examination, rested his head on my shoulder. Then, trying to eat as noisily as possible, I started to chew a leaf, letting another protrude from my hand which I kept near my mouth. The manœuvre didn't fail to interest Toto. Moving his head to the right and to the left, smelling, revolving his big eyes, sticking out his long tongue, opening and closing his mouth, finally he managed to capture a leaf and slowly began to chew it. One can imagine my satisfaction, and how avidly I set in to devour one leaf after another, even forgetting in the enthusiasm of the moment that all my life I have always loathed vegetables. And the more I ate, the more Toto ate, each time taking the leaves with more facility.

This experience was enough to send to the devil all my work. Every hour I could spare I passed in the palisade conducting my object lessons. And in this way Toto learned to drink water from a bucket after he had watched me several times bend and suck the water directly with the mouth. And to find and eat various other leaves, and to lick the salt which the Okwapi likes so much and which I, unfortunately, like so little, and which after each lesson left me with a terrible thirst for the rest of the day.

But Toto learned so quickly and so well, and every

- [*facing:* 1. TOTO COULD PROJECT A GOOD FOOT OF TONGUE  
2. TOTO DRINKS, SPREADING HIS FRONT LEGS, GIRAFFE-LIKE

day grew more fond of me, with so much trust and confidence, that nothing was too much for me to do for him.

When my companions wanted to exercise their wit and humour, they draped themselves indolently on the palisade and commented freely on my antics. Often they saw me in my function of Okwapi-mother, galloping like a madman between bushes and trees, jumping over trunks, passing under big lianas, tearing my clothes and skin against thorns, while Toto docilely followed me everywhere. Only now and then he would stop definitely, refusing to budge until I returned to give him a caress, or a little scratching under the throat, the only place his tongue could not reach, or to pinch his neck as his mother would have done with gentle bites.

And so day after day passed rapidly for both me and for Toto, who, between one thing and another, never had time for nostalgic thoughts. The only moment when he showed some home-sickness was at sundown. That was the moment when, in the hiding-place in the forest, he would have been listening impatiently. From far away he would have heard the longed-for gallop approaching. Then his mother, big and strong and comforting, would have entered the green labyrinth, appeared at the opening of the shelter. She would have found him standing waiting for her, ready to throw himself voraciously upon her for his warm, appetizing dinner. During which she would have licked him all over, giving him meanwhile who knows what interesting news about the far big river where she had been to bathe, the encounters made, the various events of the forest.

Then Toto would have laid down, happy and satisfied, well near to his mother so as not to have to fear the cold of the night, nor all those mysterious noises, those obscure dangers, which—there is nothing to say—the night brings to everybody.

Instead of all this, my lettuce leaves, my caresses, my words of sympathy and the little blanket I tied around him! Small consolation and quite a poor substitute, I am sure Toto thought. And he looked at me with his big eyes, suddenly so sad, that it broke my heart. During the whole day he had taken the air of a full-grown Okwapi. But in that moment, and if his dignity and his vocal chords had permitted, he would certainly have cried something like "Mama!"

It is true that there in that hut, well made and clean and warm, he didn't have to fear either the dripping of the rain nor the fall of great trees nor the ambush of the leopard, nor the poison of the snake, nor all the other dangers and all the other anxieties that embitter the life of his contemporaries in the forest. But so young, how could he know it?

If at least I could have given him the company and warmth of another animal during the night, perhaps I could have consoled him a little. One evening I tried. After the bad experience of the cow, the only animal at my disposal was a goat. I took it into the hut, tying it at a certain distance from the place where Toto usually slept, so that the goat could move freely and go near to him, but could not give him a butt with her horns. Toto didn't move an inch, nor did he turn his head from the opposite direction in which he chanced to be looking. A beginning not too encouraging. But

perhaps, I thought, in a few hours they will become friends.

When, after dinner, I came back to the hut I quickly lost every hope. The continuous, stupid baaing of the goat must have grated terribly on Toto's nerves. Having taken refuge in the farthest corner of the hut, there he was standing, turning his eyes to the sky, exactly like one of us who would say, "Please, please take away that disgusting, noisy imbecile before I go mad." And not to leave me in any doubt as to his feelings, he lifted his head and stamped incessantly on the ground with his stiff little foreleg—that gesture of his I found so charming. "Oof! Take her away! Take her away!"

Nor did his gesture of impatience cease, nor would he decide to lie down, before the goat and her beastly baa had disappeared far away. Only then he calmed down and rested his head on my arm.

"Believe me, better alone than in bad company." he would have said to me, if it were not for the fact that the Okwapi leaves to men the saying of trite things like that.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### THREE MORE OKWAPI

FIFTEEN days after his capture Toto suddenly fell sick, and in two hours, in spite of all our efforts to save him, he was dead. We had all grown so fond of him and so interested in him, that his death, I must say, was quite a shock and left the clearing empty and sad.

The autopsy I made showed that the cause of death was an intestinal disease of long standing, evidently contracted before the capture. Perhaps the forest's natural remedies and the mother's instinct might have healed this sickness, but it certainly was complicated by the goat milk given to Toto in the first days of captivity. We soon found, too, that the milk of at least one of the goats was infected, as her two kids, and a young buffalo taken in those days and nourished on the same milk, suddenly died.

Just at this time Eric was obliged to go back to England, much as he would have liked to remain with the expedition, and much as we wanted him to stay with us until our return. But the death of Toto had set us back a step ; everything was to be started all over again, and we did not have the slightest idea when we would be able to finish our work. So Eric went, accompanied by royal salutes from our rifles. And as we watched him disappear for the

last time into that forest wall surrounding the clearing, we were not ashamed of the mist that blurred our vision, for we knew it to be a sincere and spontaneous declaration of the staunch friendship we had formed during so many months of pleasant and always harmonious association.

The capture and freeing of the adult male—the one I called Beautiful—and the capture and loss of Toto, had helped to deepen our acquaintance with the Okwapi, and our knowledge of his character and habits, but had not advanced us at all toward the fulfillment of one of our greatest desires and dearest aims, the shipment of the specimens for the London Zoo.

The following six months did nothing but accentuate and underline this situation. The forest seemed to oppose us more stubbornly than ever, and difficulties of one kind or another arose inexorably each time we thought a new capture was at hand.

Under my own supervision, or under the direction of my wife in a part of the forest where she could undergo the strain of remaining alone for weeks, or following my orders at many days of march from either of us, groups of *mfundi* and pygmies searched for months on end for tracks of Okwapi mothers. From time to time such tracks were found, but on each occasion either a sudden outburst of long rains, or the attack of a leopard, or an unexpected charge of *M'zei*, defeated all our efforts.

Although I was convinced that an adult Okwapi was not as good a risk as a young one, would be not only more difficult to transport and tame, but would have less chance of living a long time in captivity

in Europe, I was at last forced to resort again to the attempt of getting a full-grown animal in a pit, a task infinitely simpler than the capture of a young. I could only hope that this time I might be fortunate in securing an Okwapi with a more docile temperament than Beautiful had displayed.

The answer to his new programme came almost immediately, in the form of a magnificent female fallen into one of the *zemu* surrounding the Mutwegwe clearing.

Then I was faced with a decision not easy to make. This female was so much quieter and more peaceful than Beautiful had been, accepted at once with such good grace my caresses and the water and leaves I gave her, that the prospect of getting her out of the pit and keeping her in captivity appeared quite promising. To release her, seemed absurd. On the other hand, if she should die during these operations it would mean, I knew, trouble for me. I felt in my bones that in this case the Brussels colonial authorities, being five thousand miles away and therefore not in a position to weigh and judge the situation exactly, would take into consideration only the fact that I had had my two Okwapi, that both were dead, and that the permit reluctantly restored to me could thereby be deemed to have expired.

While all the men I could lay hands on were feverishly working at cutting away the sides of the pit so that the animal could be taken out, I considered the wisdom of building a small palisade around the pit, where I could leave the Okwapi for some days ; and even the possibility of connecting it with the big corral ready at the base camp by a corridor built

day by day to permit the animal to advance toward our clearing without incurring the risks of transport. But the memory of Beautiful's sudden transformation and violent attack was too fresh, and I was afraid that in the palisade or later in the corridor this female would repeat the same manœuvre and either escape or wound herself in the attempt.

Finally I decided for a quick transport on a solid, comfortable stretcher. Some natives immediately set to work to build it, others continued the excavation, and the few remaining men were sent ahead to enlarge the path as much as possible so that the huge tipoye could pass.

Without interruption, sleep or food, we worked for about thirty hours. At the end the big female was stretched on the tipoye, firmly but comfortably tied to it, with a good bed of leaves beneath her, and several blankets around her to protect her from contact with branches and stumps during the trip.

But the animal was very heavy and the stretcher, too, constructed, as it was, of the hard wood of the forest. And the *potopot*, after the recent heavy rains, was appallingly slippery and thick; and the men already tired and scared out of their wits at the idea of going through the forest at night.

Before we were able to start it was late afternoon, and at once there began for me an actual agony which I will not forget for a long time.

All that the natives seemed able to do was to shout at the top of their lungs, get in the way of each other, slip in the mud and drop the tipoye every few yards, all the rest of the time bumping into one tree after another.





Although I love my men, I was absolutely wild at them. I knew only too well that if these loud noises and jolts and bumps and jerky movements continued they would kill the hypersensitive Okwapi as surely as a rain of spears. Furthermore, when complete darkness fell, I noticed with despair that, in spite of all the cajolery, the threats, the encouragement and the help I had given to the men, and all the promises of the greatest *matabisha* I could think of, in two hours we had not yet covered the distance we usually made in fifteen minutes ; which meant that, at that rate, the time necessary to go from the Mutwegwe to the base camp would be increased from four to thirty-two hours !

Suddenly, without any warning, one of the usual storms broke loose, and before I could say a word the tipoye was on the ground and the men were huddled against the trunks of the trees.

Precious as the Okwapi was, I had to think first of all these poor, naked, discouraged devils, shivering with cold.

At that moment I should have had the courage of cutting the ropes and letting the Okwapi go. But after so much labour and struggle, I could not bring myself to do it—a decision which I have bitterly regretted ever since.

Instead, with cigarettes and promises of francs, I coaxed some of the men to put up a rough shelter of leaves—a few minutes' work—to protect the animal from the icy rain. Then I went back to camp in order to send some food to the men and get something to eat myself.

But before the rain stopped and the journey could

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[*facing:* THE PYGMIES HUNT WITH NETS WHICH  
THEY JOIN TO FORM A LINE HALF A MILE LONG

be resumed, the animal fell into that state of hopeless discouragement, that nervous breakdown, which is, I believe, the greatest danger for an Okwapi in captivity. And at one o'clock she passed insensibly from life to death.

This loss was for me a particularly serious one, for although I could not possibly have avoided it under such weather conditions and with the only obtainable natives in such a state of fatigue, I felt that I had made a grave mistake in abandoning the plan made after the first capture : that is, of trying to get only young specimens, captured by myself, no matter how much hard and long work it might entail.

It was true that all the Okwapi sent to Europe by the Buta Mission<sup>1</sup> were full-grown specimens. But this was a completely different case, as the Mission was under no limitation whatever, and it didn't matter very much if a live animal arriving in Europe was the sole survivor of six or seven Okwapi which had died in pits, or in transport from the pits to the Mission, or at the Mission itself.

It was also true that at that Mission, or during the transport to it, many young ones had died. This does not mean, however, that it is impractical to raise a baby Okwapi, but only that the pygmies, with their usual innate cruelty in dealing with animals had mistreated and wounded the poor little creatures during their journey to the Mission to such a point that they were unable to survive.

But if I could obtain healthy specimens of young Okwapi—not infected with any disease, as in the

<sup>1</sup> See page 154.



case of Toto—and if I could myself be present at the taking of the animals and keep them continually under my eyes during the trip to the base camp, I felt very sure that they could be safely accustomed to captivity and make the long trip to England in the best condition.

My new quest for a young Okwapi, however, was to be short-lived, for the Commissaire de Province wrote me that my permit had expired.

To him and the Governor-General and the Colonial Ministry I tried to explain that, although two Okwapi had died in my hands—one of a sickness contracted previous to the capture, and the other because the natives were unable or unwilling to finish the work of transporting the animal to the base camp—this was not due to carelessness on my part. I argued that, on the other hand, I had succeeded in freeing one Okwapi which would certainly have been killed and eaten by the natives if it had been left in the pit. And that as for elephants the law allows a certain proportion of losses for every animal captured, since I had been given a permit to export two Okwapi I should be allowed a certain latitude.

But it was of no avail.

The irony was that as soon as I had definitely decided that even if the permit were restored a third time I would not under any circumstances involve myself again with an adult Okwapi, two fell, one after the other, in old pits made by the natives on their own initiative a long time before. It was no concern of mine, but in both cases the *zemu* were in reach of our camp. And I was afraid that the

distant and necessarily not too well informed Ministry would be unable to make the distinction and would hold me responsible for these two Okwapi also.

Twice more, therefore, I started the sardonic performance of taking a lot of trouble to set free Okwapi.

And at the end of the second episode, after I had worked a night and the best part of the following day, and had seen the Okwapi disappear into the forest, I distributed good *matabisha* to chiefs and *sultani*, to my men and to my Mambuti, telling them to destroy in every zone where we had worked (be it the usual hunting territory of natives and pygmies, or a country wherein we had been the first to defeat the *tabu*), every single pit which had been excavated in the past on their own initiative, and in the last month at my request.

It was the only way I could see to avoid further trouble and complications, and the danger of being held responsible for Okwapi with which I had nothing to do.

But it was also the end of our efforts to capture Okwapi. A very sad end, after so much work and sacrifice and expense. And one which, in full conscience, I felt to be neither just nor deserved.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Especially so, as just a month before new modifications to the regulations on game made by the Governor-General, Mr. Ryckmans, created "Administrative hunting permits, delivered for scientific purposes, and authorising the capture or the shooting of animals listed in the first tableau of the decree No. 29—Agriculture, of March 9th, 1934."

Among the animals there listed is the Okwapi. For the first time its capture and shooting are foreseen by the law, as well as the tax to be paid, of 3,000 francs for one specimen. In the same decree are considered the Elephant (3,000 francs), the Pygmy Elephant (5,000 francs), the White and Black Rhino (10,000 francs each), the Gorilla

(15,000 francs), the ordinary and Derby's Elands (500 francs each), etc. etc.

Beside the fact that these taxes are to be paid, these "Administrative permits" are free, and are to be given by the Governor-General only under certain conditions which practically make the Tervueren Museum their arbiter. For, as the Governor-General himself was so kind to explain to us, these permits will be granted only when facilities or gifts of a similar value are first assured to that Museum.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### A NEW RACE OF OKWAPI

THE report on the observations we have made during our long stay in the forest, and on our study of its strange, fascinating inhabitants, concludes, as far as our principal quest is concerned, with the announcement that I am now ready to make of the discovery of an unknown, well-distinct race of Okwapi.

From the time that I saw the first Okwapi in freedom in the forest surrounding our base camp, I felt that they did not correspond exactly to the various descriptions I had read, and even less to the few specimens I had seen mounted in museums.

This impression was strengthened as soon as our first Okwapi fell in a *zemu*, where it was easy for me to make a much more careful and detailed examination of the animal. An opportunity that, between parentheses, very few white men had hitherto had.

New and more significant confirmation of my former doubts came with the spoils of the first two dead Okwapi, and later from skulls which I had plenty of time and opportunity to study and measure at the villages of chiefs on both sides of the Epulu river.

I am mentioning intentionally the wide, deep Epulu, because it is a river that no Okwapi could cross in any season of the year, and as, perhaps for this reason, it constitutes the northern and part of

the western border between the habitats of the two races. The remaining borders of the country where this hitherto unknown race thrives are, as far as I was able to ascertain, the Ledna and the Lindi rivers west and south, and the Semliki on the east.

Finally, during a long trip in that part of the Okwapi country which remains outside of these borders—that is, the Uele, the Itimbiri and the Aruwimi—I was able to examine a good number of Okwapi skulls, both at Mr. Putnam's camp (west of the Epulu river) and in native villages, and to see and photograph at the Buta Mission and again at the Putnam Camp live Okwapi captured and brought in by native hunters.

The complete similarity between all the spoils and the live specimens of these countries, and their uniform differences with the Okwapi of our original field of work in the Kibali-Ituri (as above delimited by the Epulu, Lenda, Lindi and Semliki rivers) made me definitely certain of the distinction between the two types, and of our right to announce the discovery of a new race.

This new race, until it will be formally described and named by an authoritative zoologist, I propose to call *ocuapia kibalensis*.

Surprising as it may seem at first glance that this race of Okwapi has escaped until now scientific notice, it is a fact which may be easily explained by the very limited and vague knowledge that the world has had of the animal, as well as by the origin of the great majority of living specimens and of prepared spoils which have reached civilised countries in the past.

For a careful examination of the short history of

the Okwapi<sup>1</sup> will show that with the sole exception of the spoils collected by Sir H. H. Johnston (so incomplete as to induce him to believe the Okwapi to be an *equus*), and perhaps of the remains, also incomplete, later sent to him by Ituri officials,<sup>2</sup> all the Okwapi known to have reached Europe came from the country west of the Epulu River, and the greater part from the Buta region, a good six hundred kilometres from the zone I have referred to in the Kibali-Ituri.

The most striking difference between the two races is found in the head.<sup>3</sup> The *ocuapia kibalensis*, at parity of age and development, has a much longer, thinner and lighter head than the *ocapia johnstoni*. In the former, the front line descends straight from the horns to the nose; while in the latter, this line forms a well-defined convex angle at about one-third of the distance between horns and nose.

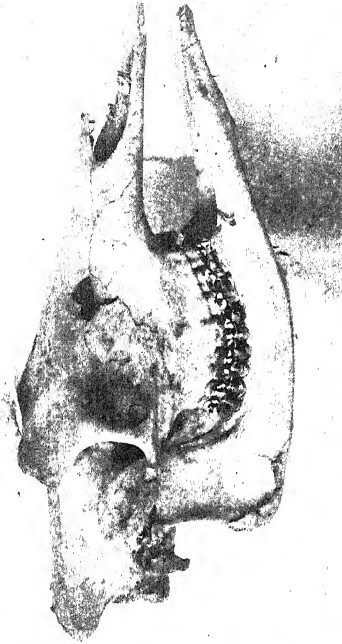
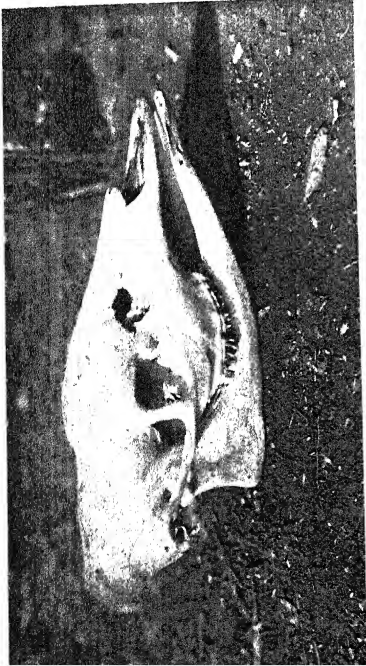
Viewed from above, the head of the Kibali Okwapi forms a regular triangle from the temporal bones to the nose, while that of the *ocapia johnstoni* forms a massive square from the temporal bones to the beginning of denture, narrowing sharply thereafter and continuing in a very thin strip to the nose. This is what gives to the head of the Okwapi of the first-known race that strange, uncanny appearance, further emphasised by the convexity of the lateral

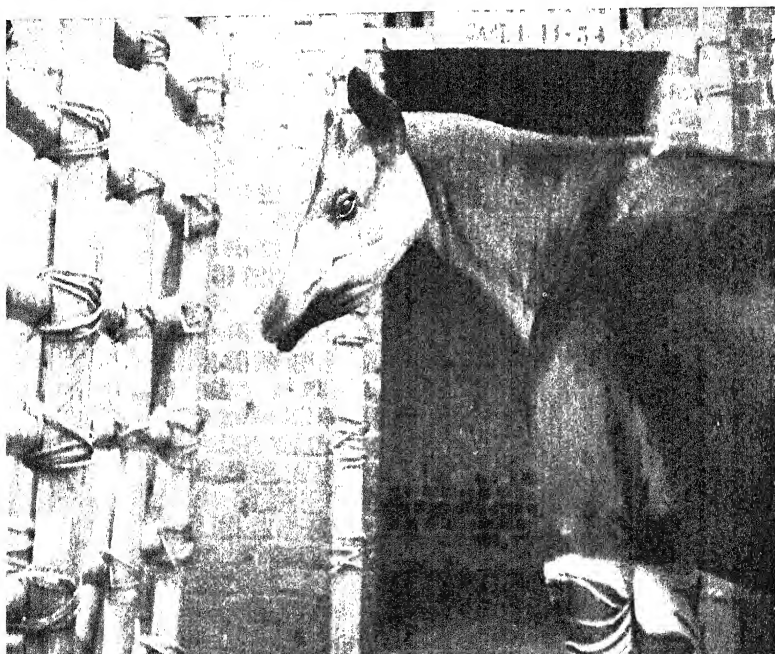
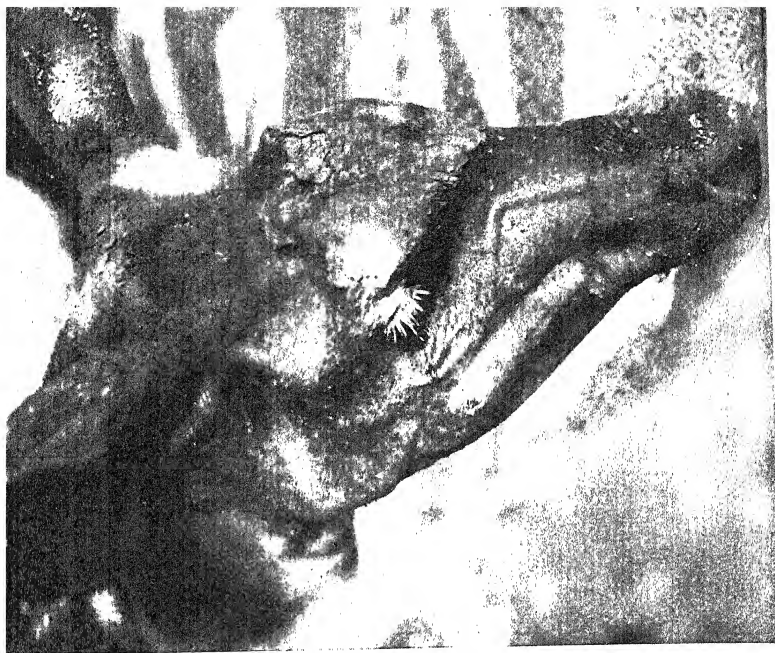
<sup>1</sup> See page 150.

<sup>2</sup> Although there is no reliable record of the location where these Okwapi were killed, I have reason to believe that it was in the Ituri, but outside the zone I have indicated as the habitat of the *ocuapia kibalensis*.

<sup>3</sup> Present circumstances, insufficiency of instruments and reference books and my own lack of experience in this matter, make the description a tentative one, and such as to need much technical improvement and authoritative corroboration. I believe, however, it is clear enough for a first identification.

[facing: THE SKULL OF A FEMALE OF THE *OCUAPIA KIBALENSIS* RACE (top—left)  
 THE SKULL OF A MALE OF THE *OCUAPIA KIBALENSIS* RACE (top—right)  
 THE SKULL OF A FEMALE OF THE *OCAPIA JOHNSTONI* RACE (bottom—left)  
 THE SKULL OF A MALE OF THE *OCAPIA JOHNSTONI* RACE (bottom—right)]







oral walls, so extreme in proportion to the lower jaw that often the upper teeth do not coincide with the lower, and hence the grinding surface is greatly reduced. This naturally influences mastication, and therefore digestion and general condition of the animal, which usually is less developed and almost always of poorer appearance of nourishment and coat than the *ocapia kibalensis*.

The skull of the *ocapia johnstoni*, massive and heavy, has a comparatively smaller ocular cavity, and in the male presents a pair of horns which were astonishing for us, accustomed as we were to the Okwapi of the Kibali. The horns of the former make one body with the skull and are strong, long, pointed and inclined toward the back. Never have I happened to see a specimen, dead or alive, with broken horns. One which I examined had horns five inches long ; many had horns of four inches or four and a half inches.

The *ocapia kibalensis*, on the contrary, has very short, blunt horns never exceeding two inches in length. They are usually so worn on the inner and rear sides as to show a flat, smooth surface. And, most interesting of all, the horns are not a part of the skull, but rest on it, on a broad, irregular base, and are held only by the skin which covers them to their inclined, flat tops. Which explains how often one finds an adult male with one horn, or no horns at all, their previous place being marked by scars left on the skin, but by no sign whatever on the skull.

Only in the very old males the skull conserves in the form of a spot of spongy bone tissue, a mark of the place where the base of the horns has become, with

- [facing: 1. THE HEAD OF THE KIBALI OKWAPI  
VIEWED FROM ABOVE  
2. A SPECIMEN OF THE OCAPIA JOHNSTONI  
AT THE BUTA MISSION

time, lightly attached to the skull ; this being the only apparent difference presented by the male skull in comparison with the female. In any case, the horns will always come away with the skin.

The difference of character of the two animals is in accordance with the appearance of their coats and general condition.

The *ocapia johnstoni*, smaller than his Kibali brother, less well-nourished and healthy, is certainly also less strong, pugnacious and aggressive. The two adult Okwapi I saw at the Buta Mission were enclosed in a low palisade of light bamboo that would not have lasted a second under the butts and kicks of one of the Okwapi we captured. Seeing those two quiet, subdued animals that went mournfully wherever they were pushed by the point of a long stick handled through the wide gaps of that weak corral, my wife and I could not believe our own eyes. Especially remembering the violence, determination and strength of our first Okwapi when, a living expression of power and might in spite of the exhaustion of forty hours passed without food in the bottom of a muddy pit, he charged and easily broke that huge palisade of enormous green trunks bound solidly together.

The impression we received at Buta found a complete confirmation in the attitude shown toward the Okwapi by pygmies and natives. While in the Aruwimi, in the Itimbiri, in the Uele, they have no fear at all of the animal, in our forest even the best hunters, both Mambuti and Bandande, consider the Okwapi to be a very dangerous animal ; as they did not mind showing by skinning instantaneously up the nearest tree every time I tried to keep them in the neighbourhood of an adult male, or even more

an adult female, which is usually appreciably larger and more aggressive than a male of the same age.

This fear of the Kibali Okwapi is so ingrained in the natives than when Toto, our baby Okwapi, was loose in the camp only *Kapita* Kaluèse, and only when I was present, had the courage of approaching him. All the other men, even the pygmies who had helped in the capture, were not ashamed to run away at full speed the moment Toto lowered his head and galloped in their direction.

Beside any other personal consideration, it is a great pity that circumstances did not allow us to bring to captivity in Europe at least one specimen of the *ocuapia kibalensis*, as it would have been greatly interesting for zoologists to have compared such a specimen with those of the *ocapia johnstoni* race then in existence.

Fortunately, I have been authorised to keep the spoils of two specimens, a male and a female. These I have prepared with the greatest care, and they will certainly be amply sufficient for the identification of this new race of Okwapi.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

### SUGGESTIONS FOR PROTECTION OF OKWAPI

FROM the majority of the many articles which appeared in the world press when "Congo," the male Okwapi presented by the King of the Belgians to the Prince of Wales, arrived in London, and later, when the animal died, I noticed how strong is the general belief of the Okwapi's extreme rarity. Many scientific and zoological correspondents even say that the Okwapi is rapidly diminishing, almost in course of extinction.<sup>1</sup>

This belief I shared until two years ago but, as I had occasion to explain during the previous chapters, from the first days of our life in the forest we were obliged to change this, as well as many other preconceived ideas we had brought with us regarding the Okwapi.

However, the fact that the common opinion of the extreme rarity of the Okwapi is not at all exact—because based only on the knowledge of an infinitesimally small exterior strip of forest—does not

<sup>1</sup> This is not very surprising. People who have never had the opportunity of studying this problem *de visu*, must rely on what is published from more or less official sources. One of these ("Congo-Nil. Ouvrage de documentation édité par la Société des Chemins de Fer Vicinaux du Congo (Vici Congo)," A. Van Assche, Bruxelles, 1935), and otherwise a very exact, informative book, contains the astonishing statement that "*The number of Okapis living in the forest is esteemed to be no more than 500-600*" (page 56).

alter the fact that Belgian Congo is the only country in the whole world where the Okwapi still live.

It is therefore most admirable that the Belgians, under the wise guidance of their Kings, have undertaken to protect this unique species and are doing everything in their power to preserve it as a precious heritage for the generations to come. And during my several years stay in Congo I have learned by personal experience that every white man, either resident or visiting explorer, hunter or tourist, realises perfectly the importance and significance of this task, and respects scrupulously the laws and regulations enforced to ensure its success.

As for the permits to kill an Okwapi exceptionally granted to some scientist or representative of scientific institutions, they are very seldom given and even more seldom used, as the Okwapi, especially in the external zone where they are so alert and not very numerous, are unbelievably difficult to approach, and not everyone has at his disposal the long period of time, the material means and the physical training required to continue the pursuit into the interior, undisturbed parts of the forest where the Okwapi, secure from any intrusion, abound in astonishing numbers.

One would, therefore, seem to be safe in saying that to-day scarcely an Okwapi is killed. And this was, I believe, more or less the impression prevailing in the Department of Agriculture of the Colonial Ministry in Brussels.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some articles of mine, and particularly two published by the *Illustrated London News* (November 3rd and 10th, 1934), seem to have provoked quite a stir at the Colonial Ministry. If my information is correct, circulars were sent to all Administrators inquiring if it was exact that Okwapi were killed as freely and continually as stated in these articles, and suggesting the study of proposals to bring serious improvement to the situation.

The facts, unfortunately, are very, very different.

Although my calculations are naturally quite approximate, I am sure that I am not exaggerating in affirming that *almost every day several Okwapi are killed*. Carefully examining my daily notes, I come to a very conservative conclusion in saying that an *average of three a day* would be as near as possible to the actual figures. An average, I mean, for every single day of the year, which brings up the total to *about one thousand Okwapi killed every year*.

On what am I basing my figures? It is enough to pass through any village near the forest and, worse, within the forest, to notice by the dozens the large belts of Okwapi skin to which, as I said before, the natives attribute magic powers against digestive troubles; and several chairs, rough imitations of deck-chairs, where entire Okwapi hides take the place of canvas. True, many of these skins are old; and, true also, many belts might be fashioned from one skin, although only the striped parts—the four legs—are used. But in the Epulu, in one village of one hundred and fifty-five pygmies I myself counted one hundred and twenty-nine belts, many several inches in width, and seven full-skin chairs.

Living for a fortnight near another pygmy village south of the Ituri River, I heard of eight Okwapi killed in those few days by the hunters of the little tribe: one killed with spears, five in pits where they had fallen, and two after having been caught in the hunters' nets.

A chief on the road from Irumu to Stanleyville four times in less than two months told me of young Okwapi captured alive by his pygmies. Very

unfortunately, this happened after my permit had been definitely withdrawn. For, every time, the chief offered to go with me into the forest to fetch the animals, which I could then have tried, at least, to raise and keep. Instead, being unable to take any more interest in the matter, I had to let, one by one, these four delightful young animals be sacrificed on the altar of "Okwapi preservation," and to be content with the knowledge that the pygmies had killed and eaten them.

As for the adults trapped and instantly killed during the same period, this chief could not himself tell me the exact number: "Certainly more than ten," he assured me.

A small *kapita*, very much in the interior of the forest north of the Mambasa-Nya Nya road, came to my camp three times in one week to offer me skins of freshly-killed Okwapi, until I sent him away with unaccustomed brusqueness, fearing that his visits might be reported inexactly and misunderstood, and that I could be accused of buying prohibited spoils.

Another *kapita* west of the road from Beni to Irumu, when I asked him if there were Okwapi in his territory, told me that they were so numerous that in a group of only a score of pits his pygmies had caught eight adults during the four previous weeks.

And so on, and so on.

Does this mean that the pygmies are left in ignorance of the protective laws covering the Okwapi? Or that the Territorial Authorities do not take care of this problem, or do nothing to try to stop this state of affairs?

Not in the least.

On the contrary, the necessities of our work keeping me in constant contact with the Territorial Administrators and Agents, as well as with chiefs and *kapita*, pygmies and other natives, dozens of times I have heard local authorities patiently explaining to pygmies that the Okwapi was not to be touched any more ; or arraigning chiefs for their failure in having obtained better behaviour in this regard from the pygmies depending from them ; or even threatening serious punishments for every native found wearing fresh Okwapi skin belts.

At other times I have seen some of these Administrators leaving their multifarious occupations for a quick surprise-*safari* in the forest to try to see if their orders were being executed.

But no man can enforce such orders when he is usually alone to administer a region several times larger than the whole of Belgium and including immense expanses of forest, for the better part still unexplored. When the pygmies, at the first alarm, or if treated with the slightest severity, can instantly disappear into the darkness of the forest, defying the most painstaking pursuit, even if somebody should undertake the preposterous task of pursuing them. When their childish, careless mentality, under the impulse of their enormous appetite, forgets immediately, without any conscious malice, all the words of the white man, all the orders of the chiefs, as soon as an animal is sighted that can satisfy their continuous need of good, abundant meat. When the chiefs themselves cannot, in the bottom of their hearts, understand why the life of an animal is more important than their own health, believing, as they do, that a

[*facing*: H'RABI FOLLOWED US EVERYWHERE,  
LIKE AN EXPANSIVE PUPPY







belt made of the skin of that animal can save them, and their people, from the illnesses continually provoked by their diet, which is very bulky and contains small nourishment.

When, finally, to seize these belts and to punish all who wear them would entail endless injustice, as not every Administrator is necessarily a taxidermist, and how could he be sure that such belts are an illegal purchase of to-day and not a property lawfully acquired before the Okwapi was protected?

Nor can one say that the pygmies, in spite of the authorities or no, wage a particular war against the Okwapi.

They, as well as their little wives and tiny children, are strong and robust, and lead a hard, physical life in a hard, damp and chilly world. They need meat, plenty of meat, to keep themselves in good condition; and more meat to trade with other natives for salt, grain, arrow and spear points. They are born hunters, and hunters by vital need. And they hunt the entire time.

They hunt with the nets, which they join together to form a line a half a mile long, toward which the whole tribe, from far, far away, makes a noisy semi-circular drive. They hunt with traps and loops and their own spears, behind which they put the greatest cunning and the coolest blood and the strongest heart that any hunter can boast.

And, especially, they hunt with the help of the pits of the primitive man. The number of these pits is simply fantastic, for while many of the ancient ones are still in good condition, each generation has added year by year hundreds of new ones. An order

to destroy the pits would be simply absurd ; the detection of them would be practically impossible, as they are cunningly masked and hidden in every most secret part of the forest ; and so indistinguishable from their surroundings that not even the hyper-sensitive creatures, such as the Okwapi, can locate them except by falling into them, which they do continually.

If in the pit or the net, in the trap or the loop, before their arrows and spears, instead of an elephant, a pygmy buffalo, a leopard, a giant hog, an antelope, the Mambuti find an Okwapi, what of it ? The name, the form, the colour, the size, do not count much. Orders and persuasive talks are forgotten, belong to another world. There is meat, the good meat, the indispensable meat !

That is all that the simple animal logic of the primitive man of the forest perceives, cruel as it may seem. And he kills and thanks Muungu, this simple little man of the forest ; he thanks his god who once more has protected him, has given him all he needs, good food and a little capital for trade.

One day, perhaps, in the future civilisation will have accomplished the crime of making of the pygmies orderly, reasoning, good subjects, full of unsatisfied needs and discontented with an unnatural life, as it has made of other natives ; and all that will remain of this marvellous, courageous, kind, happy race will be what difference in stature will survive from the contamination of intermarriage with other tribes.

But for the moment, being as they still are, they have a million times more right to protection, to

preservation, than the rarest animal species one could find in the whole world. To persuade them to leave the Okwapi alone is all right as an idea, but impracticable in reality. To persecute them if they do not do so, would be cruel and unjust, and even more impractical from the point of view of results.

As Belgium feels a strong responsibility toward the world of to-day and the future generations regarding the pygmies, of whom her colony has almost a monopoly, and the Okwapi, which can be found no place else in the world ; as a thousand Okwapi, supposing my calculations to be correct, are killed every year by the pygmies ; and as little or nothing can be done with the pygmies in the way of compulsion, as everyone knowing them at all will admit, is there some other step to be taken ?

Yes, I believe there are several. There are steps that could be taken, and although some of them at first glance may appear difficult or inadequate or even absurd, I think that they could, on the whole, be productive of quick and successful results in the interest of the pygmies and of the Okwapi, of science and of the world. And of the Congo Government as well.

All the thousands and thousands of square miles in the interior of the forest where pygmies and natives dare not go, and the white men have no reason or possibility to penetrate, constitute by themselves the greatest and safest guarantee of the species. But, beside this natural enormous reserve, in every District of the few Provinces where the Okwapi live, there are two or three or four Territories containing very few pygmies, or none at all. Either these Territories,

or others where the Okwapi are particularly abundant, could be made sanctuaries, absolute reserves. And the important factor would be to pick up in every District the Territories richest in Okwapi population, as, if they were otherwise chosen, it would be enough for some epidemic or some other unforeseen calamity to destroy every practical effect.

The advantages, in comparison with a general and equally strict protection in all the Colony, would be, first of all, that an enforcement of the law would be actually possible ; then, that by instinct the Okwapi would immediately begin to gravitate more and more toward those absolute reserves, soon becoming aware that in such zones they would never be disturbed ; finally, that the pygmies, if they really, particularly wanted Okwapi, would know where to get them, outside the sanctuaries, without any subterfuge or disobedience.

It would be most improbable, however, that the pygmies would go deliberately in search of Okwapi once they understood that there was no further market for Okwapi-skin belts among the natives living at the edges of the forest. This illegitimate market could be easily and justly closed by applying an indelible mark to all Okwapi-skin belts and chairs in existence, and establishing serious punishments for the native found in the future with ones unmarked. The marking could be simply and inexpensively done by a native clerk, while Administrators and Agents were around collecting the head-tax, as is already done for rifles, dogs, etc.

It is safe to say that at least 80 per cent. of the thousand Okwapi killed every year, young and adult,

male and female, are found alive, in perfect condition, in their hiding-places, in pits, in nets, in traps, and killed afterward. This number would diminish considerably once the sanctuaries were created and the market for belts closed. Yet it might be that outside the sanctuaries a certain number of live Okwapi would still be taken by the Mambuti. Even of those, a good percentage could be saved.

Let all the pygmies know that for every Okwapi brought alive and in good condition to the Territorial Administrator, they will receive double the amount of salt, spears, arrows, grain and cheap cotton cloth they are accustomed to get by trading the meat and skin. It would cost in all, perhaps, a hundred francs for an animal. Many pygmies would find it a very attractive bargain, and soon others and others would follow their example ; and all of them, when pushed by a strong interest, would easily learn more and more of the quite simple technique of bringing in animals unhurt and in good condition.

An inexpensive " Whipsnade " could be made in every Territory to receive the live Okwapi delivered by the pygmies. Half a square mile of forest, including all the vegetation the Okwapi use for their food, and a section of a small stream, with a much smaller corral annexed for some goats and—where possible—milk cows for the young motherless Okwapi not yet weaned, would be sufficient ; and a good native *kapita* could take full care of it, under the supervision of the nearest official.

This particular organisation could also be very useful, and even pay its own expenses. For, in the comfortable semi-captivity of these stations, Okwapi

would live and multiply, gradually lose all their fear of human beings and, if desired, grow accustomed to European food. And these stations could constitute another reservoir to help supply the world demand without bringing any extra diminution to the actual Okwapi population.

Specimens, well accustomed to captivity, could be profitably sold to zoological gardens not having the means of sending off a special expedition. Students, instead of losing months in the forest, often with the result of never seeing a single Okwapi, would have only to go to one of these stations to be able to make their researches with every necessary comfort upon a large number of animals.

Under certain limitations, journalists and tourists would be able to obtain there good information and photographs.

If some animal dies the skin and skeleton, well prepared, could easily be sold to museums, and the organs preserved in formaldehyde for comparative anatomy clinics and zoological studies in general.

From the white man's point of view, a law which undoubtedly would satisfy everybody, obtain far-reaching results, endanger in no way the protection of the Okwapi and, furthermore, supply funds to enforce it, would be one drawn along these lines.

Requests for permits to hunt or capture or photograph Okwapi in the sanctuaries not even to be taken into consideration under any circumstances.

Permits, however, to be liberally given by the Provincial Government to any reliable person asking



for them, against payment of, say, 10,000 francs for shooting, and 20,000 francs for capturing and exporting one Okwapi in a Territory outside the sanctuaries. With the clear understanding that an Okwapi wounded and escaped exhausts the hunting permit ; and that the export permit provides for the capture of two specimens, in all and for all, whether one (or both) of the captured animals has escaped, been set free, or is dead or alive. In the case of two captured Okwapi, both alive, a supplementary tax of 5,000 francs could be requested for the export of the second Okwapi. In any event, the spoils of a dead animal, or animals, being the lawful property of the permit-holder. Both hunting and capture permits to be valid in one determined Territory chosen by the interested person, and for twelve months only.

Naturally, if the Government feels like giving some of these permits tax-free to foreign scientific institutions granting similar advantages to Belgian museums, this would be its own affair.

But, at least, the interests of everybody else who has at heart the question of African fauna would be protected and rights and duties clearly established. The racket of permits asked through diplomatic channels ; of determining whether an individual is competent or not and to be considered as a scientist or simply as an amateur, to ascertain if he is representing more or less officially a scientific institution and of what importance that institution is, would be eliminated. And that it is a racket and often the source of deep injustice, and almost always based only on recommendations and friendly influences more than upon actual value and training of the

individual, I feel qualified to say, by long and wide experience, both personal and otherwise.

According with a plan of this kind, the pygmies would not be in any way sacrificed or uselessly persecuted, in the name of orders that no one could enforce.

The authorities would be saved a vast amount of time and trouble, of correspondence and circulars ; would have to watch only limited zones ; be able to do it officially, and have, through the granting of permits, the necessary funds at their disposal, without any burden on Congo's budget.

Both the country finances and the natives would benefit by the presence of the many expeditions and travellers that a policy of this kind would certainly call to the country.

And, most important of all from the preservation point of view, the Okwapi would be much more seriously and efficaciously protected than it is to-day. For the greater part of the Okwapi population would live and flourish in the intact and untouchable reservoirs of the interior and in the absolutely undisturbed sanctuaries. The remaining portion, because of its limited number itself, and of the diminished interest on the part of the pygmies, would, even considering permits liberally given to white people, sustain losses immeasurably inferior to the past and the present.

The toll on the Okwapi, from the thousand animals that now each year reach a miserable end in the pygmies' cooking-pots, would be reduced to two, perhaps three, hundred individuals disappearing from the forest. And a good part of these, instead of disappearing from the earth

as well, would find a new life in the territorial corrals and in zoological gardens of many countries, or, at least, would enrich the collections of many a museum.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

### THE FIRST CONGO BONGO BROUGHT TO CAPTIVITY

THE balance sheet headed by the word "Bongo" is the worst in all our budget of work.

The list of red figures, on the left side, is a long one. During the period stretching from April, 1934, to the end of June, 1935, I read these totals :

- (1) *Safari* organised for Bongo quest—40 (Dennis, 2 ; Eric, 4 ; Ellen alone, 2 ; Ellen and I, 14 ; myself alone, 18).
- (2) Average of time spent marching in the forest for one *safari*—9 days.
- (3) *Safari* made for my account by chiefs, *kapita* and Mambuti *sultani*—97 (39 from the road Beni-Irumu ; 36 from the road Irumu-Epulu River ; 22 miscellaneous in other zones).
- (4) Average of duration of each *safari* of natives alone—7 days.
- (5) Average of men composing our *safari*—28 porters and hunters, plus 45 pygmies. For the other *safari*—8 natives and 60 pygmies.

It is, as I am amused to find by a simple calculation, as if the forest had been swept for a whole day by a huge army composed of 360 white men, 679 native dignitaries, 15,512 native hunters, 56,940

pygmies, plus, of course, something like 40,000 women loaded with food.

Or, taking it the other way around, it is as if a group composed of one white man, 2 *sultani*, 43 natives, 158 pygmies and 111 women, had searched the forest uninterruptedly, every single day, for a whole year.

I apologise for all these statistical calculations, but I thought it the best way to give briefly an idea of the work we have done to try to get a live Bongo. To complete the picture, I will only add that, during those fifteen months, I had to supply the pay and *matabisha* for all the men, about 100,000 francs. And to buy, store, transport and distribute something like 180 bags of salt of 35 lbs. each ; 8,000 packages of ten cigarettes each ; 1,900 baskets of *bunga* and 2,000 of dried beans ; and, finally, just a quarter of a million of bananas. Using only for the transport of this material, not less than 2,000 gallons of petrol, which had to be fetched by a 200-kilometre trip from Irumu.

. . . . .

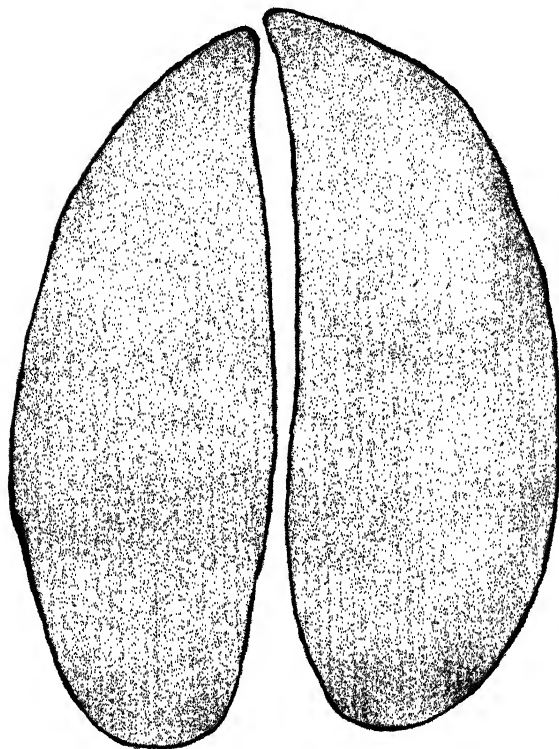
During the same period, the annotations on the other side of the ledger, written in black, make in comparison the most miserable effect :

(a) Bongo footprints :

- seen with my own eyes—footprints of seven animals.
- seen by members of the expedition—footprints of one animal.
- seen by the natives (according to their word)—anything between one thousand and none.

## (b) Bongo :

- killed by white men—none.
- killed by natives—one (Moera territory).
- seen, alive or dead, in pits—none.



FOOTPRINT OF ADULT MALE BONGO. (ACTUAL SIZE.)

—seen alive—two (one which threw in the air a son of Kalumé and disappeared ; another, which charged a group of pygmies, wounded slightly two of them, and disappeared).

## (c) Bongo photographed in freedom—none.

(d) Bongo captured up until June 30th, 1935—none.

. . . . .

Nor could we get any encouragement from other people's successes.

Of the various races of Bongo known, my good friend, Captain H. C. Brocklehurst, late game warden to the Sudan Government, writes<sup>1</sup> :

"The Bongo has now been divided into four distinct races, namely, the typical"—(*böocercus eurycerus*)—"from Ashanti and the West Coast, *b.e. isaaci* from Kenya Colony and the Sudan, *b.e. katan-ganus* from the Katanga in the Belgian Colony, and *b.e. cooperi* from the Haut Uele, Belgian Congo, the general colour of the latter being paler and the stripes closer together and more numerous. Of the skins of these killed in Sudan, I noticed that there were twelve vertical stripes on the near side and fourteen on the off side."

The only two Bongo ever seen in captivity—one in Rome, the other in New York—both belong to the Kenya race. Of the other three races, although several expeditions had tried their hand with the *b.e. cooperi*, never one single specimen had been captured and brought to Europe or America. Why? Had we attempted an impossible undertaking? Certainly there was enough to make us throw up our hands and declare a hearty "Kamerad," and call it a day.

But patience and persistence are as good currency

<sup>1</sup> "Game Animals of Sudan," by Capt. H. C. Brocklehurst (Gurney & Jackson, 1931), pages 20, 21.

in Africa as in any other country, to obtain a Bongo as to succeed in any other pursuit.

On the 24th of August we captured our first Bongo. On the 11th of October we shipped it, perfectly tame and healthy, on the flat river-boat *Kigoma*. On the 12th of November it arrived in Antwerp, and three days later in Rome, in the pinkest of conditions. The first Bongo balance-sheet was satisfactorily closed; the first Bongo of the N.E. Congo race had been brought to captivity, and everybody concerned was well pleased: the Rome Zoo, the London Lloyd's, which had covered the risk of the trip, ourselves, our boys and pygmies, and, I am sure, H'rabi herself. We began a new sheet and, full of confidence, we started the whole work all over again. For a pair of Bongo, this time.

. . . . .

H'rabi, as our men immediately christened her, at the time of capture was about 23 inches at the shoulder, and the pygmies unanimously declared that a female of that height could not be less than nine or more than ten months old. At the first moments she was badly frightened, and, small as she was then, when we brought her to the road and lifted her into one of our trucks she nearly bolted out of our hands and, kicking with the force of a powerful spring, threw two men to the ground.

Mr. Persoons, an extremely nice and friendly Territorial Agent, to whose help we are much indebted for H'rabi's capture, then had the idea of putting her into a strong bag from which only her head could emerge. The resistance she put up



during this operation was really unbelievable from such a little animal, but it was her last fight. Our complete silence, the delicacy with which we dealt with her, calmed at once any show of rebellion. Lying on a thick bed of sweet-potato leaves, H'rabi began to eat with such an appetite and a perseverance that at the end of our seven-hour drive, not a leaf remained.

Later, when we had kept H'rabi at our camp for some months and successfully closed the second Bongo chapter, too, with the capture of other specimens, we came to the conclusion that the Bongo—at least as far as the N.E. Congo race is concerned—is an animal that if captured very young adapts itself immediately to captivity and to man's food, and seems to enjoy them fully, showing in every circumstance the best and sweetest of dispositions, a very philosophical attitude, a good, steady appetite, and a quick intelligence one would not expect to find in an antelope.

From the very first day that H'rabi took possession of her corral, she felt perfectly comfortable in it, and never once showed the slightest desire to escape. This corral, which we had prepared long in advance, seemed ideally suited to the animal. It was composed of a room 12 feet by 12 feet, in a mud hut, with grass roof to protect her efficiently from the cold nights and the terrific storms of the forest; and a palisade, 15 feet by 30 feet, including a little garden of sweet potatoes and a patch of natural forest vegetation. This latter, however, I cut off almost at once, dividing in half the length of the palisade, as I noticed that H'rabi, as soon as she ate some of the forest leaves would show a restlessness and

nervousness fully justifying the wise words of old Kaluèse : “ *N’kenge*<sup>1</sup> eats wild food, she becomes wild ; *N’kenge* eats the food of the *Bwana*, she becomes *Bwana*’s animal.”

Between her patch of sweet potatoes and the room (kept well aired by ample windows with wooden bars against leopards, and always abundantly supplied with sweet-potato leaves), H’rabi divided her time in the most sensible way. Very early in the morning, as soon as the door was open, she would run out and eat all she could until the sun grew warm ; then she would lie down in a shadowy corner to ruminate until it became too hot, and the coolness of the room appealed to her. There she would alternately eat, chew and sleep, always ready, however, to catch the smallest sound with her huge, never-resting ears, and to get up to run toward the outer gate if one of us appeared. The late afternoon was spent again in the garden, eating, ruminating and lying down, but never an approaching storm or the falling night would find her outside.

The huge quantity of leaves eaten during day and night, however, and the many slices of bread we would give her throughout the course of the day, did not seem enough. A cow being out of question because of the sleeping sickness, hay and dry grains being unobtainable in the district, I tried, therefore to add to the diet some natural pasteurized milk, and the enthusiastic welcome it received led me to give it twice a day, in the early morning and late evening—each time the contents of a one-pound

<sup>1</sup> Bongo. Other native names, among the various tribes, for the Bongo are *Sori*, *Bangara* and *H’rabi*.





tin cut with an equal part of water in which some handfuls of rice and a pinch of salt had boiled for a good hour.

Remembering Toto's experience and not wanting to start again all the complications of a nursing-bottle, the first time I put the warm milk in a deep plate. As if she had never had it in any other way, H'rabi after smelling the air a second, ran to the plate and began to drink with such an avidity that I thought it would give her indigestion. So I took away the plate and emptied it but for the last little bit. As soon as this was finished, H'rabi began to push towards the tin of milk in my hand. It was enough for me to walk slowly around in a circle before pouring out another small quantity for her to learn the trick. From that time on, without my moving, she would make a complete tour around me before approaching again the plate. A sip, a tour ; a sip, a tour ; and always from the left to the right. If sometimes she would mistake the direction, I had merely to wait before pouring out more milk for her to understand and precipitously go back to the correct side.

With the same system, I tried once to have her make a figure eight around me, between one bit of bread and another. Immediately she understood the idea ; and it was enough for her to smell milk to make tours around us from left to right ; or to undertake the most conscientious series of perfect figure eights if she smelled bread.

If, in spite of all these manœuvres, the bread did not appear, she would assume the most irresistible begging position, pressing her shoulders against our legs, stretching up her neck to nuzzle her head

against us, emitting through half-opened lips a touching little "baa."

Keeping her coat always as perfectly clean and shining as an Okwapi's ; fully enjoying every hard brushing I would give her now and then ; never in any way indisposed or in bad humour ; growing up every day under one's eyes ; always inventing some new appealing little trick, and running every time we approached to lick our hands or to follow us like an expansive puppy, H'rabi soon conquered our hearts. So that we were more happy than sorry when the London Zoo, to which she had originally been destined, cabled us that they did not want the Bongo after all because they were overcrowded and had no space for her.

Soon after, however, the Director of the Rome Zoo, very anxious to obtain a prospective mate for his male Bongo from Kenya, expressed the desire to have H'rabi, and we had to prepare for the long trip. It meant a three-day drive from our base camp to Stanleyville in a home-made cage built with poles in the body of a truck. Then the transfer to a better-made cage ; eight days on the *Kigoma* from Stanleyville to Leopoldville ; a stay of five days there in Congo's capital to wait for the train to Matadi ; then the big boat and a twenty-day journey to Antwerp. Finally, several days' trip across all Europe to the Italian frontier and to Rome.

During the trip to Stanleyville, once more H'rabi showed her good disposition and philosophical temperament, merely preoccupied at each stop in resuming her consumption of leaves and milk and in enthusiastically licking our hands. At Stanleyville, a very kind friend, the Territorial Administrator,

Mr. Taupe, going home on leave, took charge of H'rabi, and gave her such good care that in spite of so many changes of climate and conditions and surroundings, she arrived in Antwerp and immediately thereafter made the trip to Rome in the very best of condition.

There, at Rome, at the only zoological garden in the whole world possessing a Bongo of the N.E. Congo, and one of the Kenya races, to make a comparison between the two will be easier than for us who, in the forest, had then at our disposal only H'rabi and the photographs of Doreen, the Bongo of the Kenya race now at New York, published by the *Illustrated London News* of October 21st, 1933.

H'rabi, being the first *b.e. cooperi* ever brought into captivity—if Captain Brocklehurst's limits may be extended from the Haut Uele to the Kibali-Ituri—his statements on the colour and stripes of its coat can be confirmed by comparison between the two specimens at Rome.

Meanwhile, tentative as our observations may be, it was very interesting for us to note the following differences between the photographs of Doreen, as a representative of the *b.e. isaaci*, and H'rabi, as a specimen of the *b.e. cooperi*.

Although Doreen at the time of capture was almost of the same age and stature as our Bongo, the former had quite long horns while the latter had none at all. According to the natives and pygmies, the female Bongo of the Kibali-Ituri and the Haut Uele sometimes has horns much smaller than the male, but very often no horns at all. If this information is exact, and H'rabi's horns do not develop at a later period of age, an important point

would be established, as the Bongo and the Eland are the only two animals belonging to the Tragelaphinæ Sub-Family, known to have horns in both sexes.

The front line of the head, which in Doreen is straight, in H'rabi is strongly convex. And the examination of an old Bongo skull found in a Uele village seems to show that this fact is due to a thick reinforcement of the bone between the eyes, similar in form, and very probably in use, to the bony-plate which allows the Okwapi to use its head as a formidable battering-ram.

H'rabi's ears are much larger than Doreen's, and with much more abundant and vivid white markings. The same is true for the oval white markings on both sides of the head.

The line of H'rabi's back is much more definitely curved and in her the disproportion between the height of the shoulder and the rump is more marked.

Finally, although this may be a peculiarity of two specimens—H'rabi and the only skin of an adult male I was ever able to obtain in the Ituri—the number of stripes is the same on both sides; while Doreen is short of one on the left side, according with the general tendency remarked by Captain Brocklehurst in the *b.e. isaaci*, and mentioned also by Mr. Raymond L. Ditmars in an issue of the New York Zoological Society's bulletin.

The Rome Zoo authorities are hoping to obtain in the near future the mating of H'rabi with her Kenya cousin. An experiment that, if feasible, will be very interesting, as it will clarify all that is still unknown regarding Bongo breeding.

Meanwhile, H'rabi's prolonged stay in our camp



has helped us in understanding and explaining some of the difficulties and of the native fears and superstitions that for so many months have so obstinately hampered and checked all our efforts in the Bongo quest.

Lately, I have heard from many sources that in the immense expanses of forest straddling the Congo River and its tributaries the Lowami, the Lualaba and the Aruwimi, and included in the District of Stanleyville, Bongo are more easily found. It may be, although, so far, we have failed to see for ourselves proof of this abundance.

But it remains established beyond any doubt that in the Epulu and the Kibali-Ituri forests the Bongo is the rarest and most elusive of all the rare and elusive animals these forests contain.

This rarity giving a high value to a Bongo skin and the belts obtained from it, which all big chiefs and witch doctors are very ambitious to wear, it may be that the sorcerers, always good business men, have created a *tabu* regarding the animal which the natives have a holy fear of breaking. This hypothesis gains strength by the fact that in many tribes to hunt a Bongo or to wear a Bongo belt is the strict prerogative and proud privilege of the highest chiefs and medicine-men.

Another fear inspired by the Bongo is a purely physical one, and results from the decision and the cunning of a charging adult. However, although I had seen with my own eyes what a Bongo at bay can do, and what a formidable weapon its huge, lyre-shaped, ivory-tipped horns may become, I could not believe that it could so frighten the pygmies, accustomed as they are to attack single-handed

much more powerful and dangerous animals, as the *M'zei*, the *Somà*, the Giant Gorilla of the mountains, the aggressive Pygmy Buffalo, and the huge and horrible Giant Forest Hog.

But even stronger than any physical fear and any artificially-created *tabu* is the whole gamut of deeply-rooted superstitions that makes natives and pygmies alike invest the Bongo with magic powers and fantastic habits.

One very general belief is that during the night the Bongo hangs itself by its horns on the high branch of a tree, not only to avoid the filthiness of the forest's mud, but also to be ready to fall upon the hunter, passing unaware of its presence, and crush him.

Other clans believe implicitly that this animal eats poisonous herbs. So firm is their belief that these people, who devour with equal gusto lizards, rats, snakes, and the vilely-smelling meat of an elephant dead a fortnight before, do not dare to touch the pink, tender flesh of the *N'kenge*.

Everyone is perfectly sure that when the hunters kill an *N'kenge*, the cows and calves of its family dive into the nearest river. There, invisible under the water, they are supposed to live until the next dry season (beginning in December or January), meanwhile losing all their hair and feeding on fish. This, the natives maintain, is one of the reasons why it is so very difficult to find Bongo in the forest.

The origin of this legend might be explained by the fact that Bongo calves are dropped, in this region, in November and December; and that, very probably, the cows when in an advanced state of pregnancy cross the rivers usually determining the boundaries of the pygmies' hunting territories,

and retire into those interior, mysterious parts of the forest where never any human being has penetrated. There, in safety, they live several weeks before and after the birth of their young ones. Then they must wait the end of the rainy season before being able to recross the rivers and return to their usual habitation, where the bulls have remained, following their custom of staying away from cows and calves except for the short period of the mating season.

Another legend of which one can see an origin based, even if approximately, on facts, and which the natives have created to explain the difficulty of seeing Bongo and to justify their fear of the sudden, often deadly, attacks of this animal, is that the Bongo can transform itself into a bush or a tree, so that a hunter may pass at a few feet from it without noticing its presence, except if it suddenly reassumes its normal form to leap upon the unsuspecting man and crush him to death with horns and hooves.

To look at a Bongo, one would say that, with its beautiful chestnut-red coat, the numerous white stripes on its sides, and all the other well-defined and so pretty markings, the animal would be very easily visible against the green and black and grey background of the foliage and the huge boles of the great forest trees.

On the contrary, the coat of the Bongo is such a perfect phenomena of mimesis with the lights and shadows, the forms and colours of the forest, and blends with them and disappears into them so marvellously, that it is no wonder if the superstitious imagination of the natives has attributed to the animal the power of passing at will from the animal to the floral kingdom.

When H'rabi took possession of her little palisade at our base camp, many times we had to spend several minutes before locating her in the few square yards of forest vegetation included in the kraal, although we knew that she was there. And when hidden in this manner, through instinct, she remained so absolutely immobile that I was able to take long time-exposures of her, obtaining, in spite of the lack of light, very good photographs. Yet, although I had taken these photographs myself at only three or four feet distance, in many cases I could not find H'rabi in the negative, and had to wait for the positive before discovering her position.

Now that H'rabi has made herself at home in the Rome Zoological Garden, she will soon lose this instinctive impulse of concealment, evidently imposed on her race by that world of fear and unremitting suspense which is the forest. For now, pacified by her new, happy life, she will forget the black shapes of hunting pygmies, the horror of falling trees and equatorial hurricanes, the continuous terror of poisonous snakes and cruel leopards.

[*facing*: THE OLD MEN SIT DOWN AND THINK OF THE  
TIME WHEN THEY, TOO, WERE HUNTERS





## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

### KWAHERI<sup>1</sup>

“*Aaa, baba, yambo, yambo, baba yangu !*”—Ah, father, welcome, welcome, our own father !

The affectionate, almost tender, welcome envelops me the instant I step into the clearing where Tshumbanzi's clan has its momentary quarters.

That clearing is an irregularly shaped diamond, gleaming with all the splendour of the tropical sun ; a diamond held in its dark emerald setting of equatorial forest by the dozens of bordering, semicircular huts shining with all the silvers of their *magongo* leaves.

From these huts, streams of cheerful, joyous, copper-coloured humanity in miniature pour out to surround me.

“*Aaa, father, welcome, welcome, our own father !*”

Diminutive men, women, children, laugh and dance, and shout, friendly, loving Lilliputians around a clumsy new Gulliver in helmet, blouse and shorts.

How far away is that day when I first came to beseech your friendship, little Mambuti of the Epulu, purest and most intact of all Great Mother Forest's little children ?

A shrill shout, that day, told me that my approach had been discovered. The vague humming, as of an immense hornet's nest, that I had perceived after the long, weary march and that had increased with every

<sup>1</sup> Farewell

one of my quickened steps until it reached through the echoing forest the volume of sound that only a big village can produce, abruptly ceased at that shrill shout. A deadly silence followed. Then a chorus of cries, the pad-pad of running feet that announced a general stampede. Then silence again, as if both you and your village had melted into the darkness of the rapidly approaching night. That day, only your open-mouthed huts welcomed me, and the spears, the bows, the cooking-pots you had left behind you in your flight from the unknown white man.

But that same night, while I was drying myself, piece by piece, at a little fire near your clearing, the stubs of my cigarettes, when indifferently tossed away, never reached the ground.

And the bright flame springing every now and then from my lighter, drew whispers from the surrounding black bushes. And when I began to smoke, putting the lighted end of the cigarette inside my mouth, this innocent little trick of my childhood obtained from those black bushes many "Wah ! Wah !" murmured by grave, deep voices.

Curiosity was slowly overcoming the fear with which your invisible eyes were studying the stranger. The design of secrecy which had brought you back, silent as shadows, to fill the blackness all around me was already forgotten.

Then, those few cigarettes I put on a leaf at the edge of the fire's little pool of light, broke completely the spell. I can still hear my words, spoken quietly, in a low voice—"Who puts there an egg may take one *tumbako*"—and the light swish-swish that followed. I can still see six tiny hands, each grasping a gleaming whiteness, appearing immediately thereafter



from the darkness. I still wonder at the magic of those dark, eager hands swiftly retreating, of the six eggs laying on a leaf where a second before the six *tumbako* had been.

The next day, when I came to your clearing, some of you whispered a shy "*Yambo, Bwana,*" from the safe distance to which you had withdrawn at my approach.

The third day many of you, Mambuti hunters, awaited my coming, bravely standing near the doorways of your huts, within which every woman and child had hid, and you risked a timid "*Yambo, baba.*"

A few more days, and every barrier had broken down between us.

A few more weeks, spent together in scouting the forest, in following tracks, in securing plenty of food and good water and some pleasurable comfort, you for me, I for you ; in facing and crossing the borders of superstition and living together in the country of mystery ; in sharing storms and heat and cold and fire and fears and safety and fatigue and rest—and we were true friends.

Now that I have come to see you once more, your glad shouts and ringing laughter and the joyous abandon of your dance of salutation, could not express more affection, trust and love ; could not sing a dearer song to my heart.

" *Aaa, baba, yambo, yambo, baba yangu !* "

" *Bakia muzuri, Mambuti !* "—May you remain in peace, Mambuti !

Yes, I have come to tell you farewell.

Already in Kisanganyi<sup>1</sup> the "big canoe of the

<sup>1</sup> Stanleyville.

*Bwana*”<sup>1</sup> waits for me, filling her capacious stomach with the scented, beautifully-tinted woods that will push her down the great, great river to Kinshasa, where the great *Bulamatar* lives.

There the *Ndege* will take me up, and my Madame with me, the “big, big bird of the *Bwana*,” the *Ndege* that roars through the air more fiercely than all the big rivers of the forest. It will take us up and away and away, until we reach our own village, far, far off. *Kupoooooooooli* !

There, in my own village and in the great village of the other *Bwana*, still will I live with you in the forest.

Even there, *Kupoooooooooli*, the forest will be with me, and its narrow, muddy passages that elephants, buffaloes, Okwapi, *N’Kenge*, open between trees and stumps and bushes.

And the signs that you, Mambuti, make at every one of the infinite bifurcations. The green branches you break in the middle. The incisions you cut in the trunk of a tree with your machete. The tubular ant-heaps you upturn. The *Magongo* leaves you put down, two by two, turned upside down. The dry sticks you tie in a small bundle to bar a path. All the other signs by which I have learned to read the way to a Mambuti village ; how to avoid a bad red ant *safari* ; where to turn to reach a buffalo that the hunters have just killed ; where to stop near the best honey filling-station just discovered.

So will I see your clearings, your dances, your hunts, your drives, Mambuti, and all the little and the big episodes of your life which for so long I have shared with you.

<sup>1</sup> So the pygmies speak of the wonder they have heard about, the big boats descending the Congo River to Leopoldville, called “Kinshasa” by the natives.

May Muungu protect you all, Mambuti friends, give you abundance and health and joy.

“ *Bakia muzuri !* ”

“ *Kuenda muzuri !* ”—May you go in peace !—you sing and shout and dance in answer.

No tears, no sadness, nor the slow, pathetically idiotic torture of waving handkerchiefs, in parting from you, Mambuti.

Time, distance, all the rest of the world do not exist for you. To come; to remain, to go, to return, do not count. Primeval, eternal, unending is your forest, your Great Mother, and you are her own children.

But I have come to tell you good-bye. For ever. To you and to your Great Mother.

Always she has called, fascinated me. Many times, when I have come to her, she has smitten me. Twice her arms have closed around me, to keep me forever. From those treacherous embraces twice I have escaped, macerated in flesh and spirit.

Do not your eyes see, Mambuti, how weak I still am, how half of myself has escaped from me ?

I go now to find it again, that other half of myself. But I will not come back. This time, it is good-bye for ever.

“ Toc, toc, toc,” answer the sticks that the Chief Singer beats one against the other, calling the attention of all.

“ Swish, swish,” other sticks, cut into brooms at one end, whisper in the hands of the young hunters who are quickly forming a long line.

The women, their children slung on their backs or sides by strips of Okwapi skin, gather under a tree

at one side. "Clap, clap!" beat their hands in unison.

The old men sit down in the centre, near me, and pass around the calabash pipe in which green leaves of wild tobacco burn, and think of the time when they, too, were mighty hunters.

And I am going away for ever. To sit down, too, and smoke and think of the times that are past?

"*Kuenda muzuri!*"

. . . . .

"*Baba, rudia mbio, Aaa, baba yangu!*"—Father, come back soon, oh, our own father!—the Chief Singer begins to intone.

Children blow in horns made of elephant tusks and in whistles of buffalo tails.

The master of the tom-toms, with prodigious speed, seems to reach at the same moment all his instruments.

Wave after wave, the syncopated music fills all the clearing, takes hold of everybody.

All the hunters, now, in one long line, sing and gesticulate, run, stop, stoop to the ground, leap in the air, run again, attack an imaginary animal, are crushed to earth, resume the fight, win, shout their victory. "*Baba*, this we will do for you, with you, when you come back!"

All the children follow their fathers, their grown-up brothers, seriously, conscientiously, aping every gesture and cry; all of them, even some who barely know yet to keep their huge bellies in equilibrium upon their short, unsteady legs. They, too, are fighting against terrible animals, and winning, and singing with their elders, "With you, *baba*, again I will be a mighty hunter!"

The babies are more and more violently shaken

[*facing:* THE BABIES LOOK AT THE SCENE

WITH THEIR BIG ASTONISHED, BROWN EYES





on the backs of their dancing mothers. But they don't mind. Hypnotised by the perfect harmony of sound and movement, of black shadows, shifting lights and copper silhouettes, they look at the scene with their big, astonished brown eyes, and do not cry.

Even the forest seems to lose some of her immobility, of her majestic solemnity, to look down with condescending tenderness upon her happy, tiny children.

The waves of dancers follow one another, transported by the never-ceasing, ever-following waves of song and music.

*"Baba, rudia mbio, Aaa baba yangu!"*

No, Mambuti, I shall not come back. Away I am going, and for ever.

For ever.

Or, at least, until next time.

Epulu-Ituri Forest,

*December 31st, 1935.*

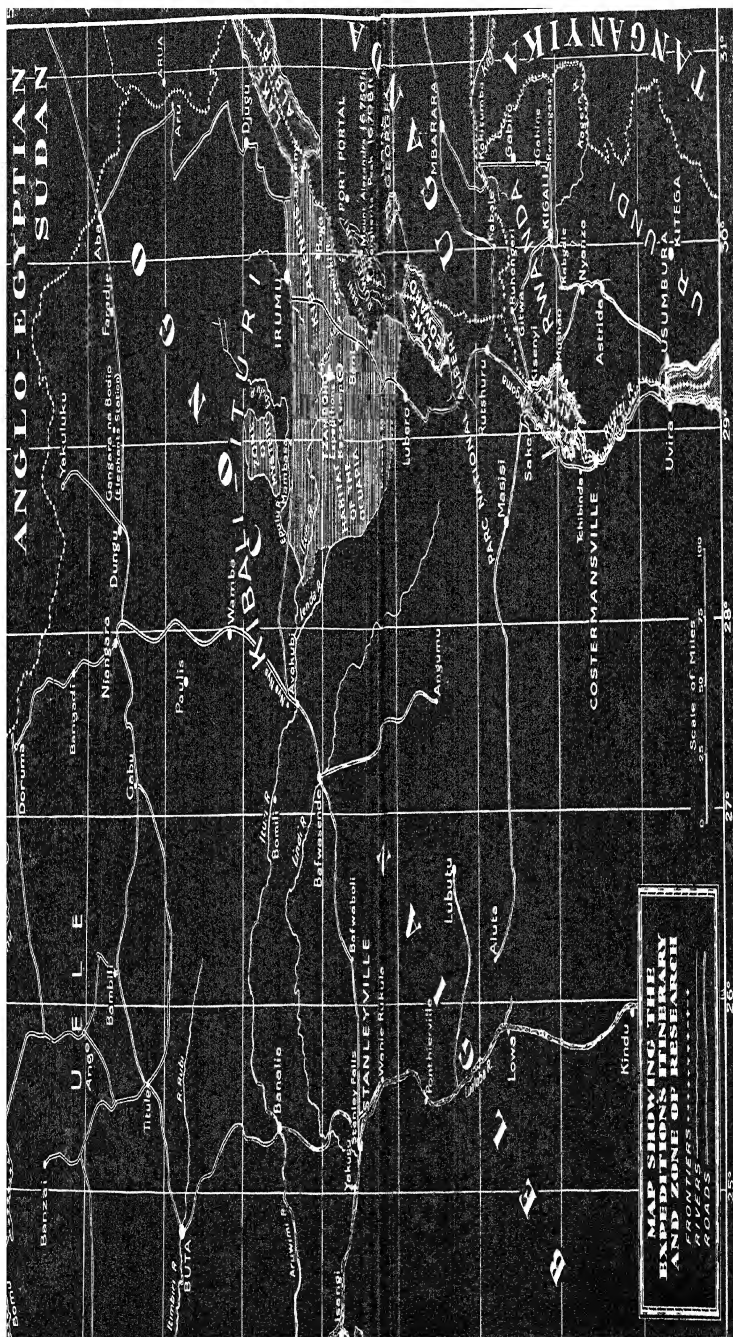
THE END

[*facing*: "NO, MAMBUTI, I SHALL NOT COME BACK.  
AWAY I AM GOING, FOREVER"]









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